AN

ORATION

DELIVERED

ON THE LATE PUBLIC COMMENCEMENT

AT

RHODE-ISLAND COLLEGE IN PROVIDENCE,

SEPTEMBER 1774. BEING

A PLEA, FOR THE RIGHT OF PRIVATE JUDGMENT IN RELIGIOUS MATTERS;

OR,

FOR THE LIBERTY OF CHOOSING OUR OWN RELIGION.

CORROBORATED

BY THE WELL-KNOWN CONSEQUENCES OF PRIESTLY POWER.

TO WHICH, ARE ANNEXED,

THE VALEDICTIONS OF THE CLASS THEN FIRST GRADUATED.

By BARNABAS BINNEY, A. B.

.....But in their Room, as they forewarn,
Wolves shall succeed for Teachers, grievous Wolves!
Who all the sacred Mysteries of Heav'n
To their own vile Advantages shall turn
Of Lucre and Ambition; and the Truth
With Superstitions and Traditions taint,
Left only in those written Records pure,
Though not but by the Spirit understood.
Then shall they seek t' avail themselves of *Names*,
Places and *Titles*, and with these to join
Secular Power, though feigning still to act
By *spiritual!* And from *that grave* Pretence
Spiritual Laws by *carnal* Power *shall force*
On every Conscience. And say, what will they then,
But force the Spirit of Grace itself, and bind
His Consort *Liberty?* And though on Earth
None against Faith and Conscience can be heard
Infallible; yet still they'll persecute
All who refuse to sign their holy Creeds.

MILTON.

With lots of *that* our Faith is doom'd to suffer!
Celestial Truth must veil her sacred Front,
Though late from Heaps of *Gothic* Ruins rais'd!
The Toil of Saints, and Price of Martyrs Blood!
Old *Rome*, again, at large will spread her Banners,
Pride, Ignorance, and Rapine shall return,
Blind bloody Zeal, and cruel *priestly* Power,
Shall scourge the Land for ten dark Ages more!

ROWE.

All Persecution for Diversity of Opinions is contrary to every Principle of sound Policy and civil Freedom. If Men quarrel with the *ecclesiastical* Establishment, the civil Magistrate has nothing to do with it.

BLACKSTONE's COMMENTARIES.

BOSTON: Printed and Sold by JOHN KNEELAND, in Milk Street. MDCCLXXI.

BRITISH MUSEUM

ADVERTISEMENT.

NOTHING short of the frequently repeted, and merely compulsive importunities of several esteemed characters, who attended the Commencement, could have prevailed upon the Author of the following Oration to let it see the light: For, although in their candor, they might have thought it tolerable when delivered, he could by no means hence infer that they would retain such an opinion of it when printed. He is sensible, that a good cause is often hurt by an indifferent advocate, and that, to do full *justice to so grand a subject as that* inestimable, most sacred and eternal Right of private Judgment *in religious matters, requires abilities and acquisitions infinitely greater than such an infant in knowledge can possibly pretend to. However, as he is conscious that his first and principal inducement to write on it, was the more universal and adequate understanding, and the more extensive and permament enjoyment of it; as he had never seen any thing of the kind, except the admirable* 5th *Vol. of Dr. Blackstone's Commentaries, which is mostly confined among the Gentlemen of the bar; and as the following Oration may possibly be the cause of producing something on the same subject more complete, masterly and beneficial, which would be so far from mortifying as highly to please him, he has a secret hope that the candid and well disposed will censure with judgment and mildness. As to such, as are the professed admirers of despotism and tyranny, whether civil or ecclesiastic; together with those, who are so bigoted to the infallibility of their own dogmas, as either, to disdain reading any thing but what squares with their prepossessions; or, to read with a firm predetermination to cavil and reject; as he thinks it would be in vain to ask any favours of them, he will save himself the trouble, simply assuring them, that he is entirely willing, they should either controvert or despise whatever he has asserted; though he is still certain, that the main of it, is strictly agreable to right reason, sound policy and true religion.*

BRITISH MUSEUM

A

VALEDICTORY ORATION.

THE conſtant and candid attendance, which this numerous and judicious aſſembly has already granted to the preceding exerciſes, has been ſufficient gratefully to affect every ingenuous mind, juſtly to merit the warmeſt acknowledgements, and pleaſingly to deter every youth preſent from attempting to tranſgreſs on their indulgent patience. It is therefore with heſitancy and reluctance that we preſume ſtill to detain you: Yet, being appointed to conclude the day, by an Oration and the Valedictions of the claſs, may we be permitted to beg your attention a few minutes longer? On a ſubject, which, *at this* period we hope will not ſeem altogether improper or unacceptable; we mean *religious Liberty*; or, a plea for it; corroborated by the fatal conſequences of its prohibition or abridgment, and the glorious effects of its protection or toleration, ſo abundantly evident in the hiſtory of every age and nation, both eccleſiaſtic and civil.

AMERICA, hitherto the infant ſtate of glorious freedom, on which ſurrounding nations, while ſtill enſlaved, gaze with envy, love and wonder; *America*, no doubt the future, ſpacious Theatre for actions yet unthought of with the ancient worthies; by her adequate conceptions, and her loyal defence of her *civil* rights, has already illuſtriouſly exalted her fame and greatneſs, and increaſed the eſteem and veneration of her friends to no common pitch. Her lateſt babes all learn her wrongs and

liſp for juſtice; while her eldeſt ſons, * more ſtrong to wield all ſcience, make her preſſes teem with the juſteſt deſcriptions of the nature, conſequences and glory of that *civil* liberty, which her delivering God did at firſt inveſt her with, and her ancient parent ſwore to proteſt her in. But, does the enjoyment and ſecurity of her *religious*

* Surely there can be none who have a ſpark of gratitude remaining but muſt eſteem *ſuch* men, ſuch *loyal* patriots, as, with generous heroiſm, have ſtep in the breach, and rationally, learnedly and *candidly* endeavored to diſſipate darkneſs and prejudice; men, who have ſpent their time, their health and their fortune, to promote the knowledge of our rights, our duty and our ſtrength; I ſay, there can be none among us who have a ſpark of gratitude remaining (let the hot-headed dogmatiſt ſay what he will to the contrary) but muſt eſteem ſuch men the mediate ſaviors of their country: For, though they may'nt command ſucceſs they are ſtill the ſame; they have *deſerv'd* it. Doubtleſs among the innumerable productions occaſioned by the late britiſh miniſtry and the conduct of the colonies, there may have been many precipitant performances, and perhaps few, compartitively, *omnibus numeris abſoluta*: But how much more precipitant do they appear, who, with the moſt deciſive aſſurance can pronounce the whole, *erroneous, clamorous and ſeditious*, by a bare ſuperficial glance even on ſuch? And how much more precipitant and tyrannic ſtill, muſt *they* be, who, hence conclude, (as ſome of the *clerical* order among us, and *proteſtants* too, think proper lately to intimate,) that the *common people* have no buſineſs with *letters*; and ſhould not be ſuffered to learn to write or read? Very pretty! Could Rome herſelf ſay more? So becauſe ſome of the people when ſinking under oppreſſions [illegible]ed that they had *feeling*, none henceforth, except the *taſkmaſters*, muſt be ſuffered to move their *pens* or *tongues*! Fond as ſome idle ſycophants are, that our race ſhould conſiſt but of two claſſes, the oppreſſed and oppreſſing; the impoveriſhed traders, and the uſurping placemen; the honeſt, laborious, though ſtarving tennants, and the indolent, pampered, though pinching landlords; the cringing, frugal mechanics, and the haughty, luxurious grandees; yet, bleſſed be God! in *this* land, at *preſent*, there is no ſuch inequality; and in him we truſt, that, to the mortification of ſuch inhuman wretches, many Æras ſhall roll round before there will be. But, that the old jeſuitical device of keeping the *common people ignorant*, ſhould *already* ſhow itſelf HERE, is aſtoniſhing! Though, that it ſhould ſhow itſelf among the *prieſts* firſt is not at all ſo. O! my fellow countrymen! *here*, is the quinteſſence and the *primum mobile* of Popery; IGNORANCE. Firſt *blind* them, and then buffet them; firſt get them ſtupid as mules, and *then* load them as aſſes. *This* is the old, utopian ſcheme of introducing and eſtabliſhing every ſpecies of diabolical uſurpation, both in politics and religion. IGNORANCE in the *common people* is the main pillar of tyranny and *prieſtcraft*. It is the moſt practical and the moſt eſſential piece of artifice in all the infernal regions. How did the poor Monks quake at the firſt invention of the art of printing; for fear that the Sun of learning ſhould ariſe with it, and they ſhould no longer be able to joſtle the *common people* under the covert of ignorance and darkneſs? When the firſt printed copies of the bible got looſe, they declaimed from their pulpits, "There was a new language diſcovered called Greek, of which people ſhould beware, ſince it was that which produced all the hereſies: That in this language was come forth a book called the New-Teſtament, which was now in every body's hands, and was full of thorns and briers: That there was alſo another language ſtarted up which they call Hebrew, and that they who learned it were turned Hebrews." The great Eraſmus tells us, his publiſhing the New-Teſtament in its original language met with a great deal of clamor and oppoſition,

gious rights leſs merit her attention than her civil? Or, are they not ſo nearly allied that a deprivation of the former in any degree is an abſolute incroachment on the latter? The anſwer, to every honeſt man, muſt be obvious; *religious liberty* itſelf is the firſt, moſt ſacred, and unalienably natural right of man.

INSTEAD

oppoſition, that one college in the Univerſity of Cambridge, in particular, abſolutely forbad the uſe of it. "Theſe, ſays he, object to us the feigned authority of ſynods, and magnify the great *peril* of the chriſtian faith and the *danger* of the church, which they pretend to ſupport with their ſhoulders, which are much fitter to prop a waggon. And theſe clamors they diſperſe among the ignorant and ſuperſtitious populace, with whom, having the reputation of being great divines, they are very loth to have their opinions called in queſtion, and are afraid that when they quote the ſcripture wrong, as they often do, the authority of the Greek and Hebrew verity ſhould be caſt in their teeth, and that, by and by appear to be a dream, which was by them given out for an oracle." Accordingly the Vicar of Croydon in Surry, is ſaid to have expreſſed himſelf to the following purpoſe in a ſermon which he preached at Paul's Croſs about this time, "We muſt root out Printing, or Printing will root out us." Lord Herbert, in his Life of King Henry VIII. p. 147, ſuppoſed that Cardinal Woolſey ſtated the effects of this Art to the Pope thus: "That his holineſs could not be ignorant what diverſe effects this new invention of printing had produced: For, it had brought in and reſtored books and learning; ſo together it hath been the occaſion of thoſe ſects and ſchiſms, which daily appeared in the world, but chiefly in Germany; where men begin to call in queſtion the preſent faith and tenets of the *church*, and to examine how far religion is departed from its primitive inſtitution. And that, which particularly was moſt to be lamented, they had exhorted *lay* and *ordinary men* to read the ſcriptures, and to pray in their vulgar tongue; and if this was ſuffered, beſides all other dangers, the common people at laſt might come to believe, that there was not ſo much uſe for the clergy. For if men were perſuaded once, they could make their own way to God, and that prayers in their native and ordinary language might pierce heaven as well as Latin; how much would the authority of the maſs fall? For this purpoſe, ſince printing could not be put down, it were beſt to ſet up learning againſt learning; and by introducing able perſons to diſpute, to ſuſpend the laity between fear and controverſy. This at worſt would yet make them attentive to their ſuperiors and teachers." However, bleſſed be God! in *this* land, the human mind is not ſo enervated and depreſt as to ſhudder at the brandiſhing of the raw ſteel; the clanking of the heavy chains; or, the mock ſolemnity of *ſacerdotal* anathemas. The people, the *common* people, ſtill dare to think, to ſpeak, to write; they ſtill dare freely to expatiate on every object round them, that is worthy their attention. *Here* is the bleſſing of a *free* people, they may tell when and where they think there is an invaſion upon their rights; they have the great liberty of informing their judgment, and after that the ſtill greater, of producing their reaſons, and entering their proteſt."

"And ſhall we tamely yield ourſelves to bondage?
Bow down before thoſe *holy* purple tyrants,
And bid 'em tread upon our ſlaviſh necks?
No; let this faithful, *freeborn*, *engliſh* hand
Firſt dig my grave in liberty and honor;
And tho' I found but *one* more thus reſolv'd,
That *honeſt* man and I would die together."

INSTEAD, therefore of offering any elaborate apologies for ſpeaking on ſuch a ſubject, To YOU, moſt benevolent and diſcerning auditors we appeal; whether, if, (as the moſt celebrated hiſtorians unitedly aſſert) *religious* liberty, is a ſubject the moſt important and intereſting imaginable, to individuals and ſociety; a ſubject pregnant with the grandeſt events to kingdoms, nations, empires; and therefore, can never be too well underſtood, too highly prized, or too often inculcated by us on our poſterity: If, (which they all *as* unitedly aſſert) the moſt extenſive liberty conceivable, excluſive of *that*, of chooſing our own religion, is but mere vaſſalage: And if, a full toleration of *that*, has ever immortalized the nation which has granted it; has ever proved the happy means of ſweetly uniting the different intereſts and communities of ſuch a nation in a peaceful harmony; has ever been found the *only* effectual method, of diffuſing uſeful and extenſive knowledge; of ſoftening and refining the manners of the people; of cheriſhing every virtuous, ſocial paſſion; of reclaiming from monkiſh ſlavery, and exalting the human mind above the low, deteſtable ſuperſtitions, which, ravage upon prieſt-ridden multitudes: If alſo, a toleration of *that ſacred right*, is the *only* true way, to ſuppreſs and *keep* under all the viperiſh brood of tyrannizing eccleſiaſtics; and to *eſtabliſh* * permanent as the ſun, immutable as the laws of truth, or God himſelf, a government equal and ſalutary through its various branches: If moreover, a prohibition or abridgment of it, has always been attended with the moſt deplorable conſequences; and has been the grand cauſe of nine tenths of all the bloodſhed which has ever happened upon this globe: In ſhort, if there is *now* any ſuch thing as perſecution for *religion's* ſake; or, if it is probable, or even poſſible, that there *may* be, either againſt or among us Americans: We ſay, to YOU, moſt benevolent auditors we appeal, whether, if theſe are facts, every perſon who has the intereſt either of church or ſtate at heart; every

* From what, the moſt renowned Hiſtories declare ever *has* been, we can't but conclude, that the moſt happy *civil* Government will be but the ſhortlived ſunſhine of a winter's day, unleſs the baſis of it, or ſome unalterable, fundamental laws in it, render ineffectual every prieſtly attempt to force conſcience; becauſe, eccleſiaſtical tyranny is as productive of civil tyranny, as civil tyranny is of eccleſiaſtical. The great Blackſtone himſelf obſerves (though, how conſiſtently with ſome other poſitions of his, the world muſt judge) that "In all ages and countries *civil* and *eccleſiaſtical tyranny* are mutually productive of each other*"; and he might have added, that *ſtanding armies* and *religious eſtabliſhments* are productive of both.

* COMMENT. Vol. I. p. 301.

ry perſon who wiſhes well to his fellow creatures, his poſterity, or himſelf; finally, whether, every perſon who is an enemy to deſpotiſm, tyranny or carnage, muſt not think every well-meant effort to eſtabliſh juſt ideas of *ſuch* liberty, laudable, uſeful and deſirable; eſpecially at the preſent juncture.

We flatter ourſelves, that the bare propoſing the ſubject will procure us the attention of the *Clergy*, *auribus erectis*; as they are all deeply intereſted, and eſpecially, as they all love to enjoy this liberty *themſelves*, however reluctantly many of them allow it to thoſe who ſubſcribe not their creeds. And we beg, as an *uncommon* favor, that we may have the *candid* attention of thoſe, who are ſo exceedingly jealous and tenacious of the ſacred dignity of that order, as to deem it the worſt of blaſphemy to ſay even ſo much truth, as they themſelves declare, through all their different denominations, one of another, namely, *That woe is to the people when the prieſts get the power.*

BY RELIGIOUS LIBERTY *we mean a free, uncontroled liberty of thinking, worſhipping and acting in all religious matters* * *as we pleaſe*, provided *thereby, we are not prejudicial to the ſtate.*

A HINT

C

* If the term '*religious matters*' ſhould ſeem vague or indefinite, by it is meant, firſt, that opinion, faith or belief which any perſon may have concerning deity or deities, be that what it may; and ſecondly, that practice, or conduct, which may be conſequent upon, or produced by, his opinion, faith or belief, be *that* what it may. This conception of religious liberty, perhaps, many will deem too extenſive; while others pronounce ſuch unbounded reſtraint productive of *licentiouſneſs*. However, as I have no inclination to deal in peremptory aſſertions, I am ready to demonſtrate, that, whoever ſhows a diſpoſition to control *this* liberty, as extenſive as it may ſeem, ſhows a diſpoſition to perſecute; a diſpoſition, that muſt finally induce him to bathe his hands in brother's blood. As to *licentiouſneſs*, is it not ſufficiently guarded againſt in the definition, which ſays, '*provided thereby WE are not prejudicial to the ſtate*'? It certainly is; if by licentiouſneſs we mean immorality, or thoſe *overt acts* which are injurious to our fellow creatures, or ſociety; ſuch as unlawful diſobedience to ſuperiors; murder; adultery; theft; perjury; of which crimes, or of any thing of their natures, in any degree whatever, cognizable by human authority, if any are guilty, let them be taken proper notice of, by the guardian of the ſtate, i. e. by the civil magiſtrate. If it be further urged that the magiſtrate ſhould puniſh thoſe alſo whoſe principles are ſuppoſed to deſtroy the foundation of moral obligation; or to have a pernicious influence upon ſociety; I beg leave to introduce that inimitable maſter reaſoner upon this ſubject, the great Dr. Furneaux. "*Principles* or *ſentiments*, ſaith he, relating to religion, are not puniſhable by penal laws. The infliction of ſuch puniſhment, even when they are profeſſed, is out of the magiſtrate's

A HINT of the equity of tolerating and enjoying this liberty, and of the folly and

magiſtrate's province; as, when they are concealed, it is out of his power; for human laws have nothing to do with mere *principles*, but only with thoſe *overt acts* ariſing from them, which are contrary to the peace and good order of ſociety." * And if the civil laws of the land do not ſufficiently define what *is* contrary to the peace and good order of ſociety, they are defective, and lame; and therefore ſhould be made more perfect and explicit: Becauſe *they* are the only rule the magiſtrate has to go by, in judging who are guilty and who not. And the meaning of thoſe laws ought to be ſo ſettled, and univerſally underſtood, as, to leave no room for him to doubt of the equity of his ſentence: For if *he* is left to conſtrue and interpret the laws, with all his bias, prepoſſeſſions and prejudice, whether for or againſt the accuſed, we are, or ſoon ſhall be, reduced to the utmoſt confuſion and anarchy. "With regard to the *belief* or *diſbelief* of *religious principles*, or *religious ſyſtems*; if the civil magiſtrate preſumes to exerciſe his *authority* as a *judge*, in ſuch caſes, with a view of reſtraining and puniſhing thoſe who embrace and profeſs what he diſlikes, or diſlike and explode what he embraces, on account of the ſuppoſed *ill tendency* of their principles; he goes beyond his province, which is confined to thoſe *effects* of ſuch principles, that is, to thoſe *actions*, which affect the peace and good order of ſociety; and every ſtep he takes, he is in danger of trampling on the rights of conſcience, and of invading the prerogative of the only arbiter of conſcience, to whom *alone* men are accountable for profeſſing or not profeſſing, religious ſentiments or principles." "For, if the magiſtrate be poſſeſſed of a power to reſtrain and puniſh any principles relating to religion becauſe of their *tendency*, and *he* be the judge of that *tendency*; as he muſt be, if he be veſted with authority to puniſh on that account, religious liberty is entirely at an end; or, which is the ſame thing, is under the control, and at the mercy of the magiſtrate, according as *he* ſhall think the tenets in queſtion affect the foundation of moral obligation, or are favourable or unfavourable to religion or morality. But if the line be drawn between mere religious principles, and the *tendency* of it, on one hand; and thoſe *overt acts*, which affect the public peace and order, on the other; and if the *latter* alone be aſſigned to the juriſdiction of the magiſtrate, as being guardian of the peace of ſociety in this world, and the *former*, as interfering only with a future world, be referred to a man's own conſcience, and to God, the only ſovereign Lord of conſcience; the boundaries between civil power and liberty, in religious matters, are clearly marked and determined; and the latter will not be wider or narrower, or juſt nothing at all, according to the magiſtrate's opinion of the good or bad *tendency* of principles. The *tendency* of principles is not *prejudicial* till it iſſues in ſome *overt act* againſt the public peace and order; and when it does, *then* the magiſtrate's authority to puniſh commences; that is, he may puniſh the *overt acts*, but not the tendency, which is not actually hurtful; and, therefore, his penal laws ſhould be directed againſt *overt acts only*, which are detrimental to the peace and good order of ſociety, let them ſpring from what principles they will; and not againſt *principles*, or the *tendency* of principles. Puniſhing a man for the *tendency* of his principles, is puniſhing him *before* he is guilty, for fear he *ſhould be* guilty. If the magiſtrate in one country hath a right to puniſh thoſe who reject the religion which is there publicly profeſſed, the magiſtrates of all other countries muſt have the ſame right; and for the ſame reaſon, namely, to guard againſt the evil tendency of renouncing a religion, the maintainance of which *they* think of great importance to ſociety. If thoſe perſons who reject chriſtianity are to be puniſhed in England, thoſe who embrace it are to be puniſhed in Turkey. This is the neceſſary conſequence of allowing any penal laws to be enacted, and to operate, in ſupport or ſuppreſſion of any religious ſyſtem; for the magiſtrate muſt and will uſe his power according to his own religious perſuaſion be that what it may." †

* Letters to Blackſtone, p. 32. † Letters to Blackſtone, p. 33, 34.

and impolicy of prohibiting it; together with a ſhort hiſtorical retroſpect of the fatal conſequences attending ſuch prohibition, and the glorious effects attending ſuch toleration, we propoſe as the method of enforcing our plea for it.

WHAT can be plainer than the juſtice or equity of this liberty? Indeed, it ſeems ſo ſelf-evident, that did not daily experience convince us, that the amazing force of education, prejudice and pride is ſo great as to make ſome think, it is rather juſt to give up private judgment to public dictates, or the decrees of convocations, than to enjoy it themſelves, it would ſeem needleſs to ſay a word about it. It is plain that the juſtice or equity of it, conſiſts in the equal, the natural, unalienable and inherent right or claim, reſulting invariably from the nature and fitneſs of things, which every individual of the human race has to it. Now, if it is not juſt or equitable that every individual ſhould have this liberty; ſuppoſing every individual *ſhould inſiſt* upon taking it, there would be injuſtice, or iniquity ſomewhere: But as we cannot conceive of injuſtice or iniquity without injury or wrong, we aſk who would be injured or wronged thereby? None? Then they would inſiſt upon nothing but what it is equitable they ſhould have. But if any are wronged thereby, we then aſk *how?* Are they wronged becauſe *all* aſſume that which *they only* have the privilege of? If ſo, we aſk who gave them this excluſive privilege of judging in matters of religion, not only for themſelves, but for others alſo? God, or man? If God, then let them produce ſome ſufficient teſtimony, by which their pretention may be juſtified: If man, or men; we ſtill aſk who gave *them* authority to confer this excluſive privilege? Did it originate in councils and aſſociations of *Divines?* If it is ſaid yes; (as it often has been) we muſt ſtill follow up, and aſk, who gave *them* the monopoly of wiſdom, judgment and power? Or, did they only *divine* that they had it?* By what authority do *they* become the ſtandard of orthodoxy?

* It may be alledged, that other men's underſtandings are better, and more penetrating and judicious than our's; or, that great numbers, eſpecially of perſons remarkable for their age, as well as for their piety and learning; are more likely to be in the right, than a few individuals; and that, conſequently, it will be ſafer to be guided by *their* judgments than our's. To this I reply; that a man's *own* underſtanding, be it more or leſs judicious, is the only faculty which God hath given him to diſtinguiſh truth from error: And as every man is accountable only for the uſe of his *own* underſtanding, not for that of other men's; conſequently, his ſafety conſiſts not in giving up

orthodoxy? And above all, by whoſe commands, do they hereticate, anathematize and perſecute thoſe, who cannot help thinking different from them? We will not ſay who; 'tis enough for us to demonſtrate that no prieſt, or ſet of prieſts; no man, or ſet of men; whether lords temporal or *ſpiritual*; whether thoſe who are ſubject to majeſty, or *majeſty itſelf*; ever did, or ever can, with the leaſt ſhadow of juſtice, prohibit or abridge this right of private judgment in religious matters. It is plain, that, none *can* control this liberty, but thoſe who have ſuperior *power*: But if ſuperior *power* alone can ſufficiently authorize, or juſtify the controlment; we are reſolved into a ſtate of nature; to talk of juſtice, right and equity is mere cant; perſecution has no exiſtence; they who have moſt power have moſt right; and every one may do whatever his inclination ſuggeſts, if his ſtrength is ſufficient! But ſurely this can never be, where there is a cry of government, law and a free ſtate! But, if ſuperior *power* cannot juſtify any man, or men in dictating what ſhall be the faith of their fellow creatures, neither can ſuperior *learning* or *knowledge*: Becauſe, *all* human knowledge does but manifeſt that all men are fallible, and therefore, incapable of aſſuming the prerogative of judging for others in matters of religion. Since therefore, neither human power, nor human knowledge can juſtify the abridgment, or excluſive enjoyment of this liberty; but it ſtill remains as much the right of the

up his *own* to the direction and control of *others*, but in uſing it himſelf to the beſt advantage. If he follows the judgment of *other* men, though ever ſo wiſe and learned, contrary to his own ſenſe of things; he may perchance *profeſs* what is *right*, but he *does* what is *wrong*. For, the profeſſing any doctrine ſhould always follow the conviction of the truth of it; and an honeſt man cannot profeſs what is contrary to his conviction. To embrace, or profeſs, any point which he does not believe to be true, in compliance to human authority, is exalting *human* into the place of *divine* authority; and ſaying in one word, that it is better to obey man than GOD. Submitting to the deciſions of human authority in matters of faith, is prejudicial to, and even ſubverſive of, true religion, where it does not iſſue in downright hypocricy. For, as, on the one hand, by the exerciſe of our rational faculties in ſearching after truth, we are not only likely to arrive at it, but to improve in the love of it, in candor, docility and openeſs to conviction; and are diſpoſed to ſumbit to its influence: So on the contrary, *in proportion as we reſign ourſelves* to the conduct of human authority, truth loſes its charms and its influence over us; and we become blind to its cleareſt evidences and brighteſt characters, and are thus prepared to be led into the moſt abſurd ſuperſtitions and vileſt corruptions of religion: And this is the caſe among all parties in the degree in which they give up the free exerciſes of their underſtandiugs, and take human authority for their guide.

Letters to Blackſtone, p. 22.

the beggar as of the prince; of the ſavage *Hottentot*, as the orthodox preciſian; of the rankeſt deiſt, as of the greateſt ſaint: Becauſe it is the inherent, unalienable gift of God to all; and ſince moreover, God himſelf cannot give it excluſively; becauſe it would be directly contrary to the very firſt and the moſt eſſential principle in the whole ſyſtem of intelligences, namely, that the dictates of our *own* conſciences, and not thoſe of another's muſt be forever followed; we muſt conclude that the full enjoyment, toleration and protection of it are highly equitable; and the prohibition of it moſt unjuſt and iniquitous.

THERE never was an Æra in hiſtory, in which, perſecution was not uſed, *pretendedly* at leaſt, as the means, of working *conviction* in diſſenters; or, ſomehow, of forcing the aſſent of the *mind*. There can ſcarcely be found a period, in which, the wheel, the ſword, and the fagot; or any other corporeal conſtraints, were uſed, barely, for the purpoſe of gaining *profeſſors* of a religion, and not *believers* of it. Indeed, if the bare external, organic, or corporeal profeſſion, confeſſion, or aſſent to any religion, is all that is aimed at; it muſt be acknowledged, that *corporeal* pains or penalties are not void and fooliſh; but well adapted to that end: But the folly of attempting to alter the *judgment*, *ſentiments*, or *mental* language,* by corporeal, coercive meaſures, is ſtrange indeed! How inadequate, how uſeleſs to accompliſh the end! While the mind is an inacceſſable queen, who is ſecluded in ſome inviſible, unknown receſs of an elegant, beautiful and auguſt ſtructure; a queen, who has determined what God ſhe will worſhip, and in what manner; a queen, who can baffle, or render ineffectual, all the compulſive ſtratagems of her united enemies to alter that determination; either, by cauſing her prime miniſter to give out that ſhe conforms to the popular cry when ſhe does not, merely to prevent the rude rabble from damaging her palace; or, by myſteriouſly eluding through ſome unknown outlet, when they ſhall ruin or deſtroy it: What brutal folly, and what

* "Every man's private perſuaſion or belief, muſt be founded upon *evidence* propoſed to his own mind; and he cannot but believe, according as things appear to HIMSELF, not to others; to his own underſtanding, not to that of any other man. Conviction is always produced by the light which is ſtruck into the mind; and never by compulſion, or the force of human authority. There is ſufficient room for our receiving inſtruction and aſſiſtance in matters of religion, without being deprived of our right of judging, in the laſt reſort, for ourſelves. And *that*, we *muſt* do, in oppoſition to all human authority, in whatſoever hands it be lodged, and with whatſoever *venerable titles* it comes recommended." Letters to Blackſtone, p. 20.

ſavage madneſs is it, to attempt to alter her *faith* or *ſecret* practice, by ſuch diabolical methods? We ſay, that there is no religion without faith of ſome ſort or other. By faith, we mean, the belief of ſome certain fact, truth, principle or principles, which, we think ought to be credited. Now, can any perſon ever believe any of thoſe principles, facts, &c. which, are propoſed for his credit, unleſs, he ſees ſufficient evidence attending them to gain his aſſent? Never. Will the penalties and puniſhments of nonconformity to thoſe who demand his aſſent, ever produce evidence? Never; unleſs of a bloodthirſty diſpoſition. Will the ſtill more ſevere puniſhments of ſuppoſed Heretics, ſuch as impriſonment, whipping, racking, hanging, &c. ever conquer the *mind*, (the body they may) alter its *judgment* for the better, reclaim it from its ſuppoſed error, or afford any ſigns of truth or goodneſs in a religion *thus* eſtabliſhed? Never. Muſt not, then, the dictates of every man's conſcience, who is untainted by the curſt inebriating inſtigations of *prieſtly* cruelty, join to affirm, that it is the height of folly *thus* to attempt it? And ſince no way is ſo likely to produce evidence and conquer the mind, as a diſpaſſionate, deliberate diſcuſſion of that which is propoſed for credit; muſt not reaſon herſelf, that voice of God in man, forever declare, that when no evidence is produced by that method, nothing can be ſo diſagreable to her, nothing ſo unbecoming the human ſoul divine, nothing ſo contrary to the will of heaven, as to refuſe any man the liberty of peaceably believing, what he *can* ſee evidence for? She muſt. Hence, we muſt conclude, that as all poſſible attempts to alter mens religious ſentiments, except that of free and candid diſquiſition, are means, no ways adapted to the end; or calculated to produce their deſired effect; they muſt forever be eſteemed, in the minds of the honeſt, the rational, and generous, attempts as vain and fooliſh, as unjuſt and tyrannic.

If, as we have aſſerted, the common aim in prohibiting or abridging this liberty, or in perſecuting, is the conviction of the mind; the great *impolicy* of it, muſt be no leſs evident than the injuſtice and abſurdity. Degenerate as mankind are, there is univerſally no ſmall degree of ſenſibility, pity and commiſeration apparent among them, when men are murdered, tortured or maletreated for their *religious heterodoxy*; whether real or ſuppoſed. And this, almoſt, infallible mark of true magnanimity;

magnanimity; this noble, generous ſympathy, has often warmed and inflamed the kindred paſſions in mere ſpectators; and rouſed to righteous deeds of heroic vengeance on the perſecuting herd; 'till *prieſtly Neros* have trembled to the centre, at the juſt retortion of their own bloody acts.* The narrowminded ſouls, who never knew the godlike glory of forbearing, have often bluſh'd, and ſunk in ſhame, to think how far they ſhot beyond their mark. Never was there a cauſe perſecuted yet, whether chriſtian or pagan; whether, rational and righteous, or abſurd and deviliſh, but it grew; for an experimental confirmation of this, ſearch all antiquity; but eſpecially look back to the reformation from popery; then, extend your view ſtill farther, to the commencement of chriſtianity; enquire of the *reverend* Phariſees; aſk of the *ſage*, jewiſh Rabbies; of *Pilate*; the *Roman ſoldiers*; of the infamouſly famous tyrants, who during the ten perſecutions wallowed in human blood, and clouded the heavens with the ſmoke of conſuming martyrs; aſk *them*, who have gibbited their names for poſterity to gaze at, with deteſtation and horror; aſk *Nero*, *Domitian*, *Trajan*, *Adrian*, *Antonius Pius*, *Severus*, *Maximin*, *Decius*, *Valerian*, *Diocleſian*, and *Galerius*; aſk them all, how much they ſuppreſſed chriſtianity? And whether, in the end, ten chriſtians did not ariſe at the burning of one? Then come back and aſk of all the popes, biſhops, cardinals, priors, prieſts, monks and friars, from the time the papal throne was firſt erected, 'till the noble JOHN WICKLIFF, dared to diſſent from the whole world, and at one ſtroke, to lop off the immenſe body of papal trumpery; we ſay, aſk of all thoſe *holy Gentlemen*, whether their unutterable barbarities did not turn of good account to the reformers? And amount to a demonſtrative proof that their cauſe was bad? It cannot be denied. Let that tygris *bloody Mary*, her attending inflammatory zealots, and biggoted ſucceſſors; let the monſters *Gardiner* and *Bonner*; let the flames of Smithfield; and the ſtill more exquiſite and ingenious

* For the truth of this and the following aſſertions, ſee almoſt any hiſtory; whether civil or eccleſiaſtic; but eſpecially, Moſhiem's; or ſome other authentic hiſtory of the riſe, and progreſs of Chriſtianity 'till the days of Conſtantine. The hiſtory, alſo, of the reformation; and of the horrible ſufferings of the church of Scotland, will ſo much more than confirm, what can be ſaid, in ſo very ſhort a performance, of the *injuſtice*, *abſurdity*, *impolicy*, and worſe than brutal cruelty of abridging this religious liberty; as to make, if we have any feeling left, our very blood run cold in our veins; while our ſouls glorioufly on fire, reſolve, by all that's good or great, never to wink, or lie dormant at the firſt and leaſt approach of that crimſon monſter perſecution; but with deſtruction in our aim, nobly to ruſh on her very vitals at once.

ous tortures of Scotland; all, from their long-tried experience, impartially declare the true merit of prohibiting the ſacred right of private judgment; and ſay, whether they will not unitedly cry, *impolitic! impolitic!* Come nearer home, and aſk the ſame queſtion of thoſe cruel ſtatutes, and the intolerant ſpirit of the times, which firſt drove our faithful anceſtors to this land of freedom; and ſay, whether they alſo, muſt not join the common cry, *impolitic! impolitic!* Indeed, if experience, that beſt of teachers, did not point out the impolicy of ſuch conduct; a moderate degree of common ſenſe might. Nothing is more common among men, than to treat with entire and ſovereign neglect, all the multitude of little, nibling cavillers, and injudicious, ſilly opponents, as unworthy their notice: And yet nothing is more common among men, than to be very angry at the *truth*; and eſpecially, if it ſtrikes againſt any part of their conduct or prepoſſeſſions; and above all, if it ſtrikes at their faith or practice in *religious matters*. And hence the world have learned, to look upon the perſecution of a religion, as no indifferent voucher for its veracity, or authority. For they are apt to reaſon in this manner, if reaſon, argument, or ridicule could confute; they, i. e. the oppoſers, would never be at the expence of confuting, or trying to confute with the ſword and fagot. Indeed, as a noble author * has made, pretty plain, ſo ſtrangely are men attached to a cauſe that is bitterly perſecuted; ſo apt are they to think, that it has arguments irrefutable by reaſon; ſo prone to look upon it, as, great and grand, to attract ſuch attention; that a hot perſecution of *Poets* would raiſe an *Arcadia*, in a wilderneſs. Poetry would be looked upon as ſomething divine; and thouſands would long to die martyrs to the glorious cauſe. How great then, is the *impolicy* of thoſe thoughtleſs bigots, who exhibit ſo grand a proof of the badneſs of their own cauſe, and of the goodneſs of that they run down!

ALTHOUGH,

* Lord Shafteſbury's Characteriſtics.

"Having recourſe to human terrors, is bringing diſgrace upon a good cauſe; or ſupporting a bad one. For the preſumption in moſt men's minds, is always in favor of the cauſe which is oppreſſed or perſecuted; and that this is the caſe, is owing, partly to a certain generoſity in mankind, which inclines them to ſide with the weakeſt, and thoſe who are ill treated; and partly to a perſuaſion, which appears highly reaſonable, that while argument can be maintained, terror will not be employed." Letters to Blackſtone, p. 69.

ALTHOUGH, by our hinting the injuſtice, abſurdity, and *impolicy* of the thing itſelf, (that is, the prohibiting this *religious liberty*) we are inſenſibly brought to ſee one of its conſequences; (namely, that it rather hardens in *error*, than convinces of *truth*) yet, as we propoſed glancing at the *conſequences* of this prohibition, as ſeperate, and diſtinct from the point of light, in which, the prohibition itſelf, muſt appear to every reaſonable man; (namely, *unjuſt*, *abſurd* and *impolitic*) permit us, previouſly, to advert a minute to the judicious precautions of this *Colony*;* by which, we ſhall be led, firſt, to that fountain-head of all wickedneſs, that *Hydra-miſchief*, UNION OF CHURCH AND STATE;† and then, to what we propoſed, the *conſequences* of this *union*, prohibition or abridgment, for the former ever produces the latter.

* RHODE-ISLAND.

† It was obſerved in the advertiſement, that I had never ſeen any thing on this ſubject, except Dr. Furneaux's letters to the great Blackſtone. I might have made a diſtinction; though ſtrictly ſpeaking I never did. Indeed, I have ſeen ſeveral pieces on *religious liberty*: But I never ſaw any thing, except the abovementioned, which deſcended to the *root* of that tree of evils, *religious tyranny*. And the UNION of *church* and *ſtate*, or of *eccleſiaſtic* and *civil government*, is moſt evidently the *root*; the *root*, whence, as long as it remains, in ſpite of all human efforts to prune, or clip, will inevitably, at frequent periods, proceed, the limbs, the buds, and leaves, which are for the deſtruction of the nations. The juſtly admired author abovementioned, in what he has written, has ſufficiently evinced, though he has not ſaid it in *totidem verbis*; that *there*, in *that UNION*, were conceived, brought forth, nouriſhed and made ſtrong, all the innumerable hoſt of religious *deſpots* and *perſecutors*. All, that has ever fallen in my way, upon this ſubject, except what that gentleman has ſaid, ſeemed barely to plead *this right* for ſome *particular* ſect or party; and though perhaps well-aimed, ſeemed ever to drop, far ſhort of the mark: Whereas, deſiring to know no parties, but to plead this *ſacred privilege* for all parties, upon the moſt thorough conviction, I am compelled to proceed much further than moſt parties or denominations will approve of; even ſo far, as to be willing and ready to maintain, that *religious liberty* ever has been, and ever will be loſt, in every nation, kingdom or ſtate, in proportion as that nation, kingdom or ſtate ſhall chooſe, eſtabliſh, protect, defend or favor any particular religion to the excluſion of all others. I am not fond of proping lame arguments by appealing to great names; nor of any performance, which looks like a patchwork of ſtale authorities; nor of dogmatically aſſerting a thing, becauſe others have done it before, or becauſe it has obtained the ſanction of the *learned* and *pious*. *Reaſon* I would make the teſt; divine reaſon; by that judge alone, am I deſirous every mouth and pen ſhall be acquitted or condemn'd, whether they drop things new or old, common or uncommon. I had not the happineſs of ſeeing the charming author which I have ſo often already quoted, 'till I had nearly finiſhed the above oration; and though perhaps ſome will think he has been called upon enough already; yet, as, the more juſt conceptions of this liberty is what *alone*, I aim at; and as I am heartily willing he ſhould have more honor, than I am afraid he will at preſent get; and eſpecially as his moſt invaluable work is not very much known; unconvinced

THIS COLONY, is juſtly renowned for the impartiality, with which, ſhe treats men of all religions and denominations. Indeed, in her very *Charter*, the floodgates of perſecution are forever effectually ſhut; for by *Charles* the IId. it is expreſly

of any crime, I muſt ſtill make uſe of him. Many perhaps, eſpecially thoſe contracted ſticklers for that papal ſcheme, *uniformity of ſentiment in religious matters*, will be ready to obſerve that 'every *ſtate* as well as every individual hath a right to judge for itſelf in matters of religion, or to chooſe its own religion.' * To which let me reply, in the words of *that man*, whom all America ſhould honor and eſteem, 'That the ground of inference in theſe two caſes, is very different. The reaſon upon which every *individual* hath a right to chooſe his own religion, is, becauſe religion is the reſult of perſonal conviction, and the rewards of it ſought and obtained, not by *collective bodies*, but by *individuals*, as the fruit of their own perſonal character and conduct. In the caſe of a ſtate, or civil ſociety, chooſing a particular religion, thoſe grounds of election, which I have mentioned, can have no place: The ſole intereſt which a *civil ſociety* can have in this matter, is its promoting the good order of the community; and *this* is effectually provided for by the magiſtrates encouraging the general principles of morality which prevail amongſt all parties, and which are by no means peculiar to any peculiar ſyſtem or mode of worſhip.

Again, I obſerve, that by "the ſtate's chooſing its own religion," the author means, chooſing a religion in order to its being eſtabliſhed, with excluſion of all but its own members from civil offices and emoluments.' (Which is always the natural and neceſſary conſequence of eſtabliſhing any religion; and, indeed, by almoſt every eſtabliſhment, except that of the church of England, diſſenters are not only incapacitated to ſerve in offices of truſt; but puniſhed into the bargain, either by forfeitures, whips, or priſons, &c. and how long *that* eſtabliſhment will remain ſo mild, God only knows!) 'A very different caſe from that perſonal choice, which every individual makes of a religion for himſelf. Had he meant no more than that the ſeveral members of the ſtate, or the magiſtrates and perſons in office, have a right, as individuals, to judge for themſelves as much as any other members of the community; the obſervation would have been true, but nothing to the purpoſe. But the right of an individual to chooſe the religion which he is to profeſs and practiſe, and the right of a ſtate to chooſe the religion which it is to eſtabliſh, and on the profeſſors of which it is to beſtow an excluſive title to its civil offices, are things widely different; particularly in this reſpect, that the former, the right of an individual to chooſe his own religion, interferes in no reſpect with the right of any other perſon; whereas the latter, the right claimed by a ſtate firſt to chooſe, and then to eſtabliſh with an excluſive teſt, a particular religion, does incroach upon the rights of others, by laying upon them an incapacity of enjoying theſe privileges and advantages to which, in common with their fellow ſubjects, they have a natural claim.

However, "ſuch an eſtabliſhment, with excluſion of all but its own members from "civil offices," the author ſaith, "is a meaſure neceſſary to be adopted, in order to "prevent the ill effects of the peculiar opinions of others, firſt upon their own paſſions, "and in conſequence upon the peace and order of that ſociety, which having choſen "and eſtabliſhed a different mode of religion, muſt have the ſame right to preſerve "what it hath thus eſtabliſhed, that it hath to preſerve itſelf." Upon this I would obſerve, that the defence and preſervation of ſociety in general, and all its members, from the

* Mr. Foſter's late viſitation ſermon, preached at Chelmsford, May 22. 1770, in favor of Eſtabliſhments.

preſly ſaid, " We have thought fit, and do hereby publiſh, grant, ordain and declare, that our royal will and pleaſure is, that no perſon within the ſaid *Colony*, at any time hereafter, ſhall be anywiſe moleſted, puniſhed, diſquieted, *or called in queſtion*,

the ill effects of the peculiar opinions of the different ſects of which it conſiſts; that is, from violence (for the weapons of reaſon and argument, he immediately adds, are left untouched in their hands) I ſay, the defence and preſervation of all the members of ſociety are abundantly provided for, if the magiſtrate, as conſervator of the public peace, interpoſe to prevent their perſecuting, or any way moleſting each other. And if they are at enmity, I do not ſee but the influence and authority of the magiſtrate over the whole community may control that enmity, and keep it within proper bounds; nor can I think, that partiality to any one ſect, taking it into his peculiar good graces to the excluſion of all the reſt, will be likely to aſſuage that enmity; it rather ſeems calculated to inflame it, to create no ſmall jealouſy in thoſe who have the monopoly of civil offices and emoluments, and no leſs envy in thoſe who are deprived of them. It is very obſervable, that a ſpirit of domination and contention aroſe in the Chriſtian church in proportion to the increaſe of the emoluments and power of its eccleſiaſtics; and that 'till Chriſtianity was incorporated with the ſtate or civil conſtitution, in the time of Conſtantine, there were no examples of the debates and diviſions among chriſtians, iſſuing in actual perſecution of each other, on account of difference in religious ſentiment; but no ſooner were worldly emoluments connected with the profeſſion of it, and either beſtowed by the court, or obtained by the ſuffrages of the people, than the great ſtruggle was, who ſhould poſſeſs them excluſively; and the ſeveral parties, as the moſt effectual means of annihilating each others pretenſions, fell to herſticating, anathematizing, and perſecuting one another But if the Emperor had favored all alike, had either diſtributed temporal emoluments among them equally, or rather had conferred them upon none, I apprehend the peace of the church and the world would not have been ſo ſcandalouſly violated, as it hath been, by contentions for riches and power among the ſeveral Chriſtian ſects, and eſpecially their reſpective eccleſiaſtics, and by their mutual perſecutions and violence. The large temporalities with which the church was ſoon endowed, and the principality which was at length beſtowed on the Pope, raiſed the church of Rome, and the whole fabrick of popery, to the enormous height to which they afterwards arrived. And from popery the Proteſtants brought with them, and retained among them after the reformation, an unhappy attachment to the ſhackles of human authority, and of human inventions and definitions; and as the natural conſequence, a rigid, intolerant ſpirit. In a word, if we examine the matter cloſely, we ſhall find, that human inventions in divine worſhip, human definitions of faith, and the excluſive enjoyment of worldly emoluments, as the reward of adhering to a particular ſyſtem which happens to be eſtabliſhed; theſe are the things, which have produced whatever there is of a hoſtile ſpirit amongſt the various ſects of religioniſts, and created the neceſſity of mutual ſelf-defence. Aboliſh human inventions, and human definitions, which human pride for the credit of the reſpective parties is always concerned to ſupport, and remove the monopoly of worldly emoluments for which this author pleads ſo ſtrenuouſly; and, religion being no longer a matter of ſecular intereſt, the differences concerning it will hardly excite more contention than different ſchemes of philoſophy; and its diſſent modes, than different manners and cuſtoms in civil life. Men will eaſily apprehend, as ſoon as their ambitious and intereſted views ceaſe to miſlead their judgments, that the eſſence of religion, which lies in a few general principles, and in good affections and

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queſtion, for any differences in matters of religion; and that every perſon and perſons, from time to time, and at all times hereafter, do freely and fully have and enjoy, his and their own judgment and conſcience, in matters of religious concernment,

habits, may very well conſiſt with an almoſt infinite variety of ſpeculative opinions, and external modes and forms; and unity of affection will eſtabliſh that peace and tranquility in the chriſtian church, which by fruitleſs endeavors after uniformity of ſentiment and practice, hath been in great meaſure, I had almoſt ſaid, wholly baniſhed from it. Nor can I think, that where men live together in peace and harmony, a diverſity of religious ſentiments and practices is in itſelf an evil, or any way prejudicial to ſociety. I am ſure, if it be, no toleration ſhould be allowed; becauſe, under a toleration, there will perhaps be as great a variety of religious ſentiments and modes, as if there were no eſtabliſhment at all: And perhaps a greater; for as Biſhop Stillingfleet ſomewhere obſerves, "whatever limits, divides;" excluſive eſtabliſhments, founded upon human creeds and human canons, prevent the ſcriptures from being regarded as the only rule of faith and order, and the only center of union. It is the advancing of theſe into the room of the ſcriptures, which hath been the grand ſource of all the ſects, and all the ſharp contentions among them, which have ever diſgraced and divided the Chriſtian church. And can we then reaſonably aſſert the neceſſity of excluſive eſtabliſhments, as a cure for the evils which they themſelves have cauſed?—Whatever uniformity hath been produced by them in reſpect to human creeds and forms, (in which for my part I can ſee no advantage) they have often produced likewiſe, either a great degree of bigotry where the compliance hath been ſevere, or of hypocriſy, where, as hath been frequently the caſe, men have been induced to profeſs and practiſe what they diſapprove and condemn.

To the objection, that upon the principles of this ſermon, "a ſtate hath a right to "eſtabliſh and defend a falſe religion as well as the true one,—the Koran, the Viedam, "and every other the moſt abſurd, and even impious ſyſtem of doctrine and worſhip;" the author replies, that he "acknowledges the conſequence," p. 15. "But then doth "not the ſame objection," ſaith he, "lie equally againſt the right of an individual to "chooſe his religion, and defend his choice? This right," ſaith he, "cannot be com-"pletely exerciſed in either caſe, but at the hazard of chooſing a falſe religion." But there is this eſſential difference in the two caſes, that the individual who chooſes a falſe religion, ſeldom doth any prejudice by that wrong choice to any but himſelf: whereas a ſtate chooſing, and eſtabliſhing a falſe religion, with an excluſive right of civil employment (which amounts not only to defence, but to encouragement) lays ſuch inducements thereby in the way of its ſubjects to embrace a falſe religion, as few comparatively are able to withſtand; and entails likewiſe this falſe religion on poſterity, by laws, which, while there are great worldly emoluments annexed to the obſervance of them, will not eaſily be repealed or altered. And thus ſuch motives as are with the generality irreſiſtible, to the embracing of a falſe religion, are eſtabliſhed and perpetuated, to the entire and perpetual excluſion perhaps of the true religion. And this conſequence is the more likely to follow, if, as the author aſſerts, "every ſtate muſt have "a right to require, that thoſe who are appointed to the duty of public inſtruction by "the ſtate—ſhall inſtruct the people in thoſe doctrines which it hath eſtabliſhed, and "no other." p. 17. But none of theſe bad conſequences follow from that perſonal choice, which an individual makes of a falſe religion. And it is ſurpriſing, that theſe two caſes ſhould ever be conſidered as parallel, or that any ſenſible man, ſhould argue from the one to the other. In a word, true religion, as well as true philoſophy, is, I think, more likely to prevail and flouriſh upon the foot of its own intrinſic evidence,

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ment, throughout the *ſaid Colony.*" Such a glorious ſentence as *this*, reflected honor upon the britiſh throne: And the men, who nobly petitioned for it, well knew, that truth, or the chriſtian religion, could both exiſt and flouriſh *without* the intervention of any civil ſword whatever. And hence we ſee, as long as her charter endures, and is adhered to, *perſecution*, * that offspring of darkneſs, envy and ſpite; that infallible mark of an ignorant head and a wicked heart; that laſt ſhift of a poor baffled enemy; *perſecution*, that infernal fury! is forbidden, under any ſhape or pretence whatever, to enter *here*; forbidden, not only by the law of nature, and revealed religion; but, by an expreſs law of the *ſtate*. And moreover, to her immortal glory, ſo catholic and diſcerning has this *Colony* been, as not only to preſerve the ſpirit of her *charter*, but alſo to provide an act, by her aſſembly, which, in union with her *charter*, will forever ſecure her religious rights, as long as they ſhall be in force; we mean, that act, which forbids

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than by the interpoſition of human authority; which we ſee, in fact, over the largeſt part of the world, by far, eſtabliſhes a falſe religion, and excludes the true; and indeed nothing elſe can be expected, when religion depends for its reception and eſtabliſhment upon princes and politicians, who are too often under the dominion of ſuch maxims and views as are diametrically oppoſite to its genuine principles and ſpirit. Whereas if the obſtacles, every where raiſed by human authority to the entrance and prevalence of true religion, were removed; and this heavenly gueſt ſuffered to recommend herſelf to all by the luſtre of her native charms, and the evidence of her divine original; I believe, the event would be a wonderful demonſtration of the truth of that old adage: *Magna eſt veritas, et prævalebit.*

* As I am ſo often neceſſitated to uſe the term perſecution, or ſome other equivalent, it may not be amiſs to hint that by it I mean, any injury whatever, that is done to any man, not on account of any immorality, or crime againſt ſociety, or his fellow creatures; but merely on account of his religious ſentiments, or his faith and practice in religious matters; whether that injury conſiſts in ſpeaking, writing, or acting: Tho' I am willing to reſtrict the meaning, to an *external* injury; (for bare talking, or writing of a man, while he has the liberty of vindicating himſelf, is not of ſo much importance.) An injury done to his perſon, or property, either by unjuſt forfeitures of the one, or unjuſt inflictions of corporal puniſhments on the other. And of perſecution thus defined, I muſt ſay after that prodigy of Britiſh eloquence, Lord Mansfield, that, "There is nothing certainly more unreaſonable, more inconſiſtent with the rights of human nature, more contrary to the ſpirit and precepts of the chriſtian religion, more iniquitous and unjuſt, more impolitic, than perſecution. It is againſt natural religion, revealed religion, and ſound policy. Conſcience is not controlable by human laws, nor amenable to human tribunals. Perſecution, or attempts to force conſcience, will never produce conviction; and are only calculated to make hypocrites, or———martyrs." See his moſt glorious ſpeech in the houſe of Lords, in the caſe of *Allen Evans*, Eſq;

the support of *ministers*, in every manner, except that of *voluntary* contribution. Thus it is expressed; "Be it enacted by the general assembly, that what maintainance, or salary may be thought needful, or necessary, by any churches, congregations, or societies of people now inhabiting, or that hereafter shall, or may inhabit this Colony, for the support of their respective minister or ministers, shall be raised by *free* contribution, *and no other way*." * This sentence also will forever honor the men who enacted it.

By the two sentences now rehearsed, it is evident, that, in the first place, all petty tyrants, whether priests or laymen, are utterly prevented from lording it over the human mind, by making use of any irrational, external, or, corporeally coercive, or compulsive measures to effect, or bring about, any sort of religious uniformity whatever: And in the second, that, all persons within this Colony are, not only at full liberty, to hear any preacher they please, as little as they please, or none if they please; but at full liberty *to pay*, or *bestow their property* upon any preacher they please, in as sparing a manner as they please; or in no manner at all, if they please. It is moreover evident, that under such laws, regulations or restrictions, the *true* Clergy, the *honest*, *undesigning*, *non usurping* preachers of the gospel, stand as fair a chance of being treated civilly, and supported comfortably, as the primitive apostles and disciples did; nay a fairer, for, although the oppressing and avaricious, the controller and the wolf are excluded; yet, argument and reason, courtesy and beneficence, are not. It is still further evident, that by those laws there is only a dissolution of what ought never to be put together; *church* and *state*: And that by them, the *Clergy* have only lost what they *never* had a right to, the use of the civil sword; while the people have preserved what they *ever* had a right to, the exercise of their own judgment. From these several steps, it is still further evident yet, that where there is no union of church and state, that is, where there is no civil power put into the hands of the *Clergy*, (and if the magistrate meddles with, or enforces religion, we shall still look upon *him* as the *Clergy*, or the servant of the *Clergy*, whether it be in Constantinople, in Rome, or in England) by which, they may establish their creeds, and decrees, or exact their extravagant demands; there can be no such thing as religious tyranny; or persecution

* See the Laws of the Colony.

perſecution for religion's ſake. Conſequently the UNION of *church* and *ſtate* is the cauſe that produces, the very fountain whence proceeds, the ſupporter and nouriſher of perſecution, tyranny, and almoſt all the long catalogue of black enormities which *that* order of men have been guilty of. Reaſon herſelf, unaſſiſted, did predict, that the coition of bodies ſo very contrary, and heterogeneous, muſt neceſſarily beget monſters indeed: But when experience comes after, *ſhe* confirms the propheſy; ſhe declares, that it ever has been, is, and moſt certainly ever will be, like the trojan horſe, big with unthought of miſchiefs: Although it ever has been, is, and ever will be, like that ancient deſtroyer, careſs'd by deluded zealots, as the progeny of heaven;—as defenſive of the church and ſtate, and as well-pleaſing to the Deity; 'till to their coſt they find, as the miſtaken Trojans did, that they have taken unutterable pains to deſtroy themſelves, and ſet the world on fire. To ſpeak plain, it is a ſcheme, firſt contrived by aſpiring politicians, then conſented to by ſtill more aſpiring monarchs, urged on by greedy, ravening *prieſts*, and at laſt completed and eſtabliſhed by the united band.

PROBABLY it will be readily allowed, that whatever religion any nation, as ſuch, chooſes for itſelf, it chooſes *to eſtabliſh*. And it *muſt* be, *as* readily allowed, by every *reaſonable* man, that the eſtabliſhment of any religion whatever, *without* any toleration, or exemption, is the moſt deteſtable uſurpation and tyranny. We muſt hence conſequently and juſtly infer, that, ſince a toleration, or exemption from an eſtabliſhment, is that alone which renders it, in any degree, ſufferable; the toleration is the moſt amiable part of the eſtabliſhment. And ſince the more extenſive the toleration is, the more amiable is the eſtabliſhment: We muſt as juſtly infer, that a *full* toleration is *moſt* amiable: But where there is a *full* toleration, there can be no eſtabliſhment; (unleſs an eſtabliſhment of toleration) for, they are not only inconſiſtent, but utterly excluſive of each other.

IT is common for ſome people, who rather than ſay nothing, ſay any thing, to raiſe many bugbears in their own imaginations, and then tell us they are the conſequences of a *full* toleration of this religious liberty. But notwithſtanding, what any

the ſupport of *miniſters*, in every manner, except that of *voluntary* contribution. Thus it is expreſſed ; " Be it enacted by the general aſſembly, that what maintainance, or ſalary may be thought needful, or neceſſary, by any churches, congregations, or ſocieties of people now inhabiting, or that hereafter ſhall, or may inhabit this Colony, for the ſupport of their reſpective miniſter or miniſters, ſhall be raiſed by *free* contribution, *and no other way*." * This ſentence alſo will forever honor the men who enacted it.

By the two ſentences now rehearſed, it is evident, that, in the firſt place, all petty tyrants, whether prieſts or laymen, are utterly prevented from lording it over the human mind, by making uſe of any irrational, external, or, corporeally coercive, or compulſive meaſures to effect, or bring about, any ſort of religious uniformity whatever : And in the ſecond, that, all perſons within this Colony are, not only at full liberty, to hear any preacher they pleaſe, as little as they pleaſe, or none if they pleaſe ; but at full liberty *to pay*, or *beſtow their property* upon any preacher they pleaſe, in as ſparing a manner as they pleaſe ; or in no manner at all, if they pleaſe. It is moreover evident, that under ſuch laws, regulations or reſtrictions, the *true* Clergy, the *honeſt*, *undeſigning*, *non-uſurping* preachers of the goſpel, ſtand as fair a chance of being treated civilly, and ſupported comfortably, as the primitive apoſtles and diſciples did ; nay a fairer, for, although the oppreſſing and avaricious, the controller and the wolf are excluded ; yet, argument and reaſon, courteſy and beneficence, are not. It is ſtill further evident, that by thoſe laws there is only a diſſolution of what ought never to be put together ; *church* and *ſtate* : And that by them, the *Clergy* have only loſt what they *never* had a right to, the uſe of the civil ſword ; while the people have preſerved what they *ever* had a right to, the exerciſe of their own judgment. From theſe ſeveral ſteps, it is ſtill further evident yet, that where there is no union of church and ſtate, that is, where there is no civil power put into the hands of the *Clergy*, (and if the magiſtrate meddles with, or enforces religion, we ſhall ſtill look upon *him* as the *Clergy*, or the ſervant of the *Clergy*, whether it be in Conſtantinople, in Rome, or in England) by which, they may eſtabliſh their creeds, and decrees, or exact their extravagant demands ; there can be no ſuch thing as religious tyranny ; or perſecution

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any may barely *aſſert*, we ſhall ſtill think that it is juſt, prudent, politic,* and therefore reaſonable, to allow this toleration to every human creature under the ſun; even to thoſe whom true Engliſhmen have moſt averſion to, *Papiſts*. For what are we pleading for? a toleration of licentiouſneſs? a toleration of what is *prejudicial* to the ſtate? No; far from it: But for a toleration of religious liberty, which never can be ſo, either to ſtates, or individuals. We are not pleading that any nation, ſtate or people, ſhould ever tolerate the deſtruction of thoſe whom pagans, papiſts, or proteſtants ſtigmatize infidels or heretics; very far from it. If any members of a civil community, or perſons under the ſame civil government, out of a miſtaken zeal for God, or their own cauſe; think it their duty to deſtroy, moleſt or perſecute thoſe who diſſent from them in their religious ſentiments, let the civil magiſtrate as guardian of the peace of that community, or government, take care of them; let him puniſh them by virtue of the *civil* laws, not of *eccleſiaſtic canons*; let him puniſh them with all the ſeverity thoſe laws direct. And in ſo doing, he has no buſineſs to aſk whether the criminals are Atheiſts, Deiſts, Pagans, Papiſts, Jews or Chriſtians; whether Churchmen, Preſbyterians, Baptiſts, Quakers, Calviniſts, Arminians, Univerſaliſts or Sandemanians. It is enough for him to know that they are guilty; to know the ſpecific nature of their crime and the puniſhment by civil law annexed; and to ſee that they get it. If there are any whoſe religious principles teach them to kill whom they think heretics; or to be ſeditious or rebellious; or anyhow dangerous to ſociety; let the civil magiſtrate watch, and when the civil law will take hold of them, let him puniſh them: And *that*, without ever aſking them whether their religion led them to ſuch crimes, or not; which is none of his buſineſs. As to the *Clergy*, whether in their own perſon, or in the perſon of the magiſtrate, they have no more right, or buſineſs to be intruſted with the civil ſword; than a madman has to be intruſted with a firebrand in a magazine of powder; nor ſo much, for, (if experience may determine) even in populous places, the devaſtations of the former will ever be greater than thoſe of the latter.

HOWEVER

* If it ſeems contradictory to ſay at one time, it is *impolitic* to perſecute, and at another, that *politicians* have a hand in perſecution, the difficulty may be reconciled by remembering, that I ſaid it was impolitic to attempt to alter the *mind* by perſecution. For, if by the word politic, we mean *artful* or *crafty*; and the *external* ſubjection to an eſtabliſhed religion is all that is ſought after; then corporeal reſtraints, conſtraints, or perſecution ſeem not ſo *impolitic*; though it is not always that even *they* have their deſired ſucceſs.

However eaſy it is to ſay, it will not be ſo eaſy to make probable, that the eſtabliſhment of any religion, can be either eligible or neceſſary. The veracity, or authority of any religion, with *thinking* people, will never be a grain more apparent for its being *eſtabliſhed*; and conſequently it cannot gain one more *real* friend upon *that* account. Indeed it will become a fine neſt for vermin to breed in; and hence we find every religion upon earth, which has the ſhadow of an eſtabliſhment ſo full of them. It cannot contribute to the peace, ſafety and good order of ſociety; nor to the making individuals more honeſt: For, unleſs the laws of the ſtate, or the magiſtrates are weak and deficient, *they* are ſufficient for that purpoſe. A little reflection muſt inevitably teach us, that, TRUTH would ſtand a far better chance of finding admirers and advocates, if every ſtate, as ſuch, was to leave her to herſelf, and her divine protector; and only take care to puniſh its own bad ſubjects, and reward its good, without meddling with the religion of any.

But ſince it is ſo difficult to find the *good* effects of this *union* of *church* and ſtate, lamb and tyger, dove and ſerpent; bodies, which are as eſſentially different, and as unconnected as fire and water; let us apply to hiſtory to know whether it is really productive of any *bad* effects.

Distinct from its being a deteſtable uſurpation of that ſacred right which every individual ſhould have in legiſlation, or in making the laws by which himſelf is to be governed; the *firſt* bad conſequence of this prolific union is, that it produces and ratifies that unmanly diſpiritedneſs, and puſilanimity; that tame and ſhameful reſignation of private judgment, though ſupported by equity, reaſon and truth, to public edicts and decrees, though founded in caprice or cuſtom, and ſupported by arbitrary power: Which puſilanimity and reſignation, are the moſt infallible means of raiſing and cheriſhing the moſt deſigning, uſurping and graſping deſpots that ever had exiſtence; both in church and ſtate.* The *ſecond* conſequence is, that it

* "The moment any religion becomes national, or eſtabliſhed, its purity muſt certainly be loſt, becauſe it is then impoſſible to keep it unconnected with men's intereſts; and if connected, it muſt inevitably be perverted by them. That very order of men, who are maintained to ſupport its intereſts, will ſacrifice them to their own. By degrees knaves will join them, fools believe them, and cowards be afraid of them; and having

it almoſt entirely excludes all that is excellent, great or glorious in man, namely, the uſe of his reaſon, or of his own intellectual abilities; eclipſes every beam of light and knowledge; and ſpreads a univerſal veil of error, ſuperſtition and midnight darkneſs, beneath whoſe ſecret covert, continually lurk ſecure, the horrid beaſts of prey, which roam at large and gorge their ruthleſs appetites unhurt, unſought, unſeen.† The *third* is, that in proceſs of time it often makes the wiſe grow mad, and fills the world with inteſtine broils, and foreign wars. Theſe are the three principal limbs, which with their innumerable branches, overſpread the nations, and ſhut out the light of life. Such an infinitude of evils is this union fraught with, that thouſands of volumes do but partly contain them; but a very few therefore, and in a very general manner too, can we poſſibly mention, in the few minutes we have to ſpare.

WHAT

having gained ſo conſiderable a part of the world to their intereſts, they will erect an independent dominion among themſelves, dangerous to the liberties of mankind; and repreſenting all thoſe who oppoſe their tyranny, as God's enemies, teach it to be meritorious in his ſight to perſecute them in this world, and damn them in another. Hence muſt ariſe Hierarchies, Inquiſitions, and Popery; for Popery is but the conſummation of that tyranny which every religious ſyſtem in the hands of men is in perpetual purſuit of, and whoſe principles they are all ready to adopt, whenever they are fortunate enough to meet with its ſucceſs." See p. 223. Free Enquiry into the nature and origin of evil.

† Nothing can be plainer, than that in proportion as any ſet of *prieſts* whatever, pagan or chriſtian, who, backed by civil authority, and highly venerated by the people, do, either ſingly, or in their *reverential aſſociations*, continually teach them with a great deal of awful pompoſity, that they are ſurrounded with a great many *damnable errors* and *hereſies*; that almoſt every other religion, or way of thinking is dangerous and dreadful; that the one which *they* teach them is the *only* right; that if they alter their mind and fall from that, they will moſt certainly ever after live in miſery; die in horror, and be loſt eternally; and that therefore they ought not to be too curious, or inquiſitive after knowledge, &c. &c. I ſay, nothing can be plainer, than that in proportion as any ſet of prieſts make uſe of ſuch papiſtical declamations as theſe, the greateſt part of the common people will be likely to thrive in zeal, dogmatiſm and ignorance. Hence we ſee that by the greateſt part of the advocates for every religion upon earth, *this* has been the practice; (though they are all fond that their own flock ſhould well underſtand the arguments made uſe of in ſupport of their *own particular party differences*). And indeed it is no mean artifice; for the thoughtleſs, timorous and credulous among mankind will naturally fall in with ſuch precepts. Theſe were the *ancient* tricks, and to determine how diſſimilar the *modern* are, we need but look around. It is equally plain, that as ſoon as mankind are thus harangued into ſtupefaction; there is a fine opportunity for fleecing, ſadling and riding. Nor does what is here aſſerted claſh with what was ſaid of the *impolicy* of perſecution. For, the ſtratagem of firſt making the people ignorant, and of then uſing ſome degree of auſtere ſanctity, with a little of the art of perſuaſion, is the *firſt* method that is tried to convert; and then the converted are ſent to play the ſame part ſucceſſively; this was the way their holineſſes got ſo many ſubjects. As to perſecution in a more ſevere ſenſe, that is reſerved for ſteady, ſtubborn nonconformiſts or heretics.

WHAT but the baſeſt puſilanimity, what but the moſt accurſed acquieſcence in the infernal dictates of the ſacred *aſſociations* of artful, avaricious *prieſts*; and their cruel, blood-thirſty copartners, the *civil* rulers; could ever have plunged whole nations into thoſe horrible enormities, which make the blood dance cold, but at the ſhocking recollection? Let EGYPT, that houſe of *gods*, that mother of idolatry and ſuperſtition, from time immemorial declare, how immediately conſequent upon this union, this combination of prieſts and civil rulers to promote each others tyrannic ſchemes, the dictates of reaſon and common ſenſe were rejected, while their pretendedly divine illuminations and commands were univerſally adhered to. And let that ſame Egypt declare, what worſe than licentious; worſe than atheiſtical effects *that* adherence produced. * Let CARTHAGE, that ſupporter of cruelty, that cheriſher of the flames of the valley of Hinnon, declare, how tenfold worſe that brutal was the daſtardly, abominable, the aſtoniſhing ſubmiſſion to the religion ſhe patronized in her brighteſt days; becauſe it was thus by eſtabliſhment made *orthodox*. †

Let

* In moſt nations which have been zealous for their eſtabliſhed religions, death has been the portion of thoſe who dared to aſk whether it was true or falſe. In Egypt, death was the portion of any who offended the *eſtabliſhed* GODS of the nation. Diodorus ſays he himſelf ſaw an unhappy Roman cruelly deſtroy'd for killing a cat; † even though he did it undeſignedly and involuntarily. Such was the reverence commanded by the *eſtabliſhment* to be paid to their deities; namely, Oxen, Dogs, Wolves, Hawks, Crocodiles, Storks and Cats; and ſuch was the infatuation of the people in conſequence of the command, that in an extreme famine they choſe rather to eat one another, than to hurt one of thoſe holy creatures. And it was not barely affronting their ſacred majeſties which was ſuch a crime; but nonconformity to the religion of the day and nation, city, or village they lived in, was alſo puniſhed with ſeverity. Indeed in one particular they excelled the generoſity of moſt moderns; for although no God was to be worſhipped but what the nation, (i. e. the King, the nobles and the *prieſts*) had appointed, nor in any other manner than what they had ordained; yet as they generally appointed a great number, which were all worſhipped differently, the people had the liberty of chooſing among *them*, and if they did not like one, they might ſacrifice to another; though the more they ſacrificed, i. e. the more ſacrifices and money *for* ſacrificing that they brought to the *prieſts*, (who were no ſimpletons) the more religious they were. And irreligion was as great a crime *then*, as heterodoxy is *now*.

† Rollin's ancient Hiſt. Vol. I. p. 40. & Diod. l. I. p. 74.

† Let any who have the leaſt feeling left, try if they can read the inhuman religious barbarities, eſtabliſhed by that nation as orthodox, without ſhuddering. All ranks and orders of men (though I can't find that the prieſts did) were obliged cruelly to butcher and burn alive their own little ſtruggling infants, whenever their imagined deities were thought to be angry. * Even mothers themſelves, were bound to perform the monſtrous

* Plut de ſuperſtitione, p. 171. Roll. anct. Hiſt. Vol. I. p. 118.

Let the Aſſyrians, the Babylonians, the Medes, Perſians and Macedonians. Let eſpecially the Phœnicians, Gauls, Scythians, and even the illuſtrious and refined GRECIANS * and ROMANS, all ſtand as eternal monuments of the inexpreſſible darkneſs, ſuperſtition, confuſion and miſery, immediately conſequent upon that ſervile acknowledgement of whatever paſſes current for orthodoxy in religion. Even Iſrael itſelf, though its government was *theocratical*, had its ſons of Eli, and its prieſts of Baal.

BUT leaſt what has been ſaid ſhould ſeem to be invalidated by reflecting that thoſe nations were heathens; let us come down to the chriſtian Æra. And permit us to mention, previous to our hinting at ſome of the manifold evils, under which the church and ſtate have groaned, for ages, throughout all Chriſtendom; that we diſdain the thought of barely expoſing the infirmities of the *clerical* order; or of rehearſing aught againſt any, becauſe of *that* order. For, notwithſtanding gowns, and bands, and prayers, and rigid auſterities, and ſolemn countenances have deluded, and led captive in every age and nation more than ten times ten thouſands; notwithſtanding that order of men has done more miſchief in the world than all the reſt put together; yet, we know, that they have done very great good; and we know, that, in almoſt every age they have had ſome of the beſt of men among them; ſome HONEST men; emphatically ſo, a character, which contains the

monſtrous office, while trumpets and drums drowned the infantile ſhrieks. And if through the overflowing tenderneſs of maternal affection, perchance a tear ſhould force its way, the ſacrifice was loſt, and the mother puniſhed as irreligious! And ſhall a little groundleſs cenſure ever deter from bearing teſtimony againſt thoſe combinations, and uſurpations, which lay the ſure foundations for ſuch matchleſs horrors? kind heaven forbid!

* Look at Athens, that celebrated city, whoſe fame perhaps ſhall laſt 'till time ſhall be no more; look at her, and ſay, who can think of her ungrateful treatment, her iniquitous and foul condemnation; her cruel and terrible deſtruction of SOCRATES, that wonder of the earth; and not juſtify the repeated ſcourgings heaven gave her for her obſtinacy. And let any who have not read his hiſtory gueſs, for what, hemlock was made his portion? Verily, for nothing more, than his ſpending a moſt laborious and uſeful life in the ſervice of his country; and ſaying, that it was demonſtrable that there was but ONE *ſupreme firſt cauſe, ſupporter, and governor of all, who was infinitely powerful, knowing wiſe and good*; whereas, it was the received opinion of the times that there were *many* gods; and that it was impious to think of any other than thoſe the ſtate had made choice of; and as impious not to worſhip them. †

† Plato in Apolog. Socrat. Cit. de Orat. L. I.

the ſum of all eulogies. We love and admire *that* character; we can't but ſpeak well of it; and we deſire ever to eſteem and honor it: Though we hold ourſelves ſtill bound to maintain, that no man or men whatever, can have any right to impoſe their *credenda* or *agenda* upon their fellow creatures; or to dictate to them what ſet of articles they ſhall believe; or to demand their property for teaching them, or pretending to teach them, without ſome *mutual contract*. Becauſe, as ſoon as *this* is done, we are no longer freemen, but under the moſt galling ſpiritual tyranny; and thereby the wideſt door is opened for every audacious impoſition that can enter the heart of man.

CHRISTIANITY, when firſt introduced, was ſo far from containing any thing in it deſtructive of public peace, or private liberty, that it was nothing but lenity and good will to man: And while it utterly forbad violence of every ſort and degree, it proclaimed nothing but the glad tydings of joy and peace.

THE opinion of its heavenly author concerning ſacerdotal power and incorporation of church and ſtate, is recorded in few words; '*MY kingdom is not of THIS world.*' When they would have made him a king, he hid himſelf. When his miſtaken ſervants would have called fire from heaven to deſtroy a whole city, becauſe it did not think as they did; he taught them, that the ſpirit of *his* religion, was to bleſs and ſave, not to perſecute and deſtroy. Thus, rejecting all ſublunary pomp and power, he diſplayed, brighter than yonder ſun, the ſimple majeſty and effulgent glory of an incarnate God. As to his pupils, they thought indeed at firſt, pretty much the ſame as many of their *profeſſed* brethren have ſince, and do now; that it was a very clever thing to be called Rabbi, Rabbi; and to have one greateſt among them: But, they had a maſter who taught them ere he left them, that they were not to be called Rabbi, Rabbi; and that the ready way to become greateſt of all, was to be leaſt of all, and ſervant of all.

AND through the efficacy of ſuch teaching, we find, it was but a little after, before they manifeſted the moſt generous conceptions of *religious liberty*: For then it was, in the days of the apoſtles, that it flouriſhed among all who profeſſed him to

be their maſter, in its full extent; while chriſtianity in the morning of her exiſtence, like ſome delightſome, fragrant garden, ſubſiſting ſolely by the influence of the ſun, and expanding to it, all its buds, bloſſoms, and fruits for warmth, for life and beauty; was ſupported alone by the rays of the SUN *of* RIGHTEOUSNESS. She found *then* while uncorrupted, and directed by the beſt of precepts, that although ſhe was bitterly oppoſed, it would be but a poor alternative to fly to human, or diabolical authority to eſtabliſh her cauſe. Although ſhe was denied this liberty herſelf, and ſcourged from country to country for her faith and doctrines; yet, ſhe denied it not to others; but, with a heavenly ſimplicity, declared the ſimple, glorious truth, and left every individual to make what uſe of it he pleaſed; to embrace it, or diſcard it, at his pleaſure, or his peril. She *then* neither had, nor claimed, any power to make men profeſs, worſhip, or act in religious matters different from what they choſe.

Happy! O happy for the inhabitants of earth, had this golden age ſtill continued. But, that the nations yet unborn might learn to keep as watchful an eye on their *religious*, as civil rights; on their *miniſters*, as magiſtrates; and that the prowling herd of *uſurping, ſacred deſpots* might be forever blaſted with ſhame, confuſion and infamy; hear it! O Americans! Hear it! O ye unborn millions; and hearing, feel; and feeling, ſwear by heaven's great fire, that what *he* gave, you'll ſtill preſerve; ſcarce had theſe firſt promulgators laid their weary heads at reſt, before high-flying profeſſors, graſping at wealth and power, the ſanctimonious ſons of Beelſebub, began to exerciſe their ſpiritual dominion, to turn prieſthood into prieſtcraft, and to make merchandize of ſouls.

THE firſt ſucceſsful ſtratagem was, to perſuade the people, that ſince their *teachers* were by far the likelieſt to underſtand the true meaning of the ſcriptures, they ſhould ſtrictly abide by *their* interpretations of them. Thus they were ſottiſhly to relinquiſh their *own* judgments; and thereby ſhamefully to lay a broad foundation for the ſupport of whatever innovations the prolific inventions of ſuch ingenious gentlemen might happen to introduce. Such a plan as this, muſt neceſſarily have been (as we ſee it was) the mother of groſs ignorance; that again, of the meaneſt cowardice;

cowardice; that again of a numerous brood of pilfering, pillaging, ravaging knaves; and thoſe again the creators of poverty, miſery and death. A diſcovery of the utility of ſuch a plan as this, together with the fine, conſequent opportunity of cliping, interpolating and conſtruing the ſcriptures to their own vile purpoſes, was what firſt induced many great, and ambitious ſtateſmen to patronize and incorporate chriſtianity. *

So unanimouſly was this *fundamental* meaſure fallen into, that in leſs than a century and a half after the aſcention; by far the greateſt part of the jewiſh chriſtian preachers brought back juſt as many of the inſtitutions, rites and ceremonies of that nation, as they thought convenient: And the greateſt part of the ſeveral gentile preachers, as many of the religious rites of *their* reſpective nations, as *they* thought convenient. How conſcientious, upright and pious they were, in firſt making uſe of theſe dazling trinkets and gewgaws, which ſo well ſuited the common people who had been uſed to them, is not for us to ſay: *This*, we know, that as ſoon as ever *ſecular* power was thought of, to confirm and eſtabliſh the uſe of them, they brought in ſomething very handſome; a very pretty intereſt indeed. But theſe rites were not ſo numerous, glaringly abſurd, and burdenſome, 'till the *reverend Clergy*, in the third century, thought it beſt to court the favor of the civil rulers for the benefit of the cauſe of God and truth; becauſe, after that, ſo powerful were the gifts, the poſts of profit, favors and honors; the penalties, the puniſhments, indignities, and depoſitions; the ſmiles and courteſies; the frowns and threats of the great men in office, that near all thoſe, who before reſolutely oppoſed their impudent impoſitions, were now huſhed to ſilence.

'TILL the middle of the ſecond century, the different chriſtian churches or ſocieties were independent of each other; united neither by confederacies, *aſſociations*, nor any other bond than chriſtian charity. Each aſſembly was governed by its own laws, as a little ſtate by itſelf: But by degrees the Greeks, and then the Latins, formed all the different churches of a province into one eccleſiaſtical body or

* For the truth of theſe ſeveral facts, ſee any impartial eccleſiaſtic hiſtory, of the three firſt centuries, eſpecially Moſhiem's.

or *aſſociation.** Theſe aſſociations and convocations of *divines*, though they have ever proved abundantly fruitful in every work of darkneſs, containing in themſelves, the foundation and ſeeds of popery, with all popery's effects; did not, however, bring forth any thing very remarkable, 'till united to that generating huſband, *ſecular power*.

IN

* "Theſe *councils*, of which we find not the ſmalleſt trace before the middle of this century; changed the whole face of the church, and gave it a new form; for by them the ancient privileges of the people were greatly diminiſhed, and the power and authority of the biſhops greatly augmented. The humility, indeed, and prudence of theſe pious prelates, prevented their aſſuming all at once the power with which they were afterwards inveſted. At their firſt appearance in theſe general councils, they acknowledged that they were no more than the delegates of their reſpective churches, and that they acted in the name, and by the appointment of the people. But they ſoon changed this humble tone, imperceptably extended the limits of their authority, turned their influence into dominion, and their counſels into laws, and openly aſſerted, at length, that CHRIST had empowered them to preſcribe to his people *authoritative rules* of *faith* and *manners*. Another effect of theſe councils was, the gradual abolition of that perfect equality, which reigned in the primitive times. For, in their opinion, the order and decency of theſe aſſemblies required, that ſome one of the provincial biſhops met in council, ſhould be inveſted with a ſuperior degree of power and authority; and hence the rights of Metropolitans derive their origin. In the mean time, the bounds of the church were enlarged; the cuſtom of holding councils was followed wherever the ſound of the goſpel had reached, and the univerſal church had now the appearance of one vaſt republic formed by a combination of a great number of little ſtates. This occaſioned the creation of a new order of eccleſiaſtics, who were appointed, in different parts of the world, as heads of the church, and whoſe office it was to preſerve the conſiſtence and union of that immenſe body, whoſe members were ſo widely diſperſed throughout the nations. Such was the nature and office of the *patriarchs*, among whom, at length, ambition being arrived to its moſt inſolent period, formed a new dignity, inveſting the biſhop of *Rome*, and his ſucceſſors, with the title and authority of prince of the Patriarchs. The Chriſtian doctors had the good fortune to perſuade the people, that the miniſters of the Chriſtian church ſucceeded to the character, rights, and privileges of the Jewiſh prieſthood, and this perſuaſion was a new ſource both of honors and profits to the ſacred order. This notion was propagated with induſtry ſome time after the reign of ADRIAN, when the ſecond deſtruction of *Jeruſalem* had extinguiſhed among the Jews all hopes of ſeeing their government reſtored to its former luſtre, and their country ariſing out of ruins. And, accordingly, the *biſhops* conſidered themſelves as inveſted with a rank and character ſimilar to thoſe of the *high-prieſt* among the Jews, while the *preſbyters* repreſented the prieſts, and the *deacons* the *levites*." † It ſeems, theſe aſſociations were ſet up with a very good and zealous deſign at firſt; even for the advancement of *truth*; and thereby the good of the people. But if we ſhould venture to ſay what the moſt celebrated hiſtorians ſay about them; perhaps many gentlemen of the cloth would inſinuate that we were very pragmatical, and uſed them ſcurrilouſly; till moſt of their blind admirers made it their daily tone; *well, it does not ſignify, it is wrong, abominable, and unſufferable, for any body to ſay ſo many wicked things of the miniſters.* However, if any are ſo inconſiderate as to be offended at it, ſo be it: This we know, they are not offended becauſe what is ſaid is *falſe*; for nothing can be plainer in hiſtory, than that, whatever good deſign aſſociations

† Moſhiem's hiſtory of the ſecond century, vol. I. p. 138.

IN the third century the emperor CONSTANTINE aroſe; a profeſſed friend to chriſtianity. Out of his great zeal, he thought he could never be a too liberal father to the church; and in the abundance of his kindneſs, like a ſilly, fondling ape, overlaid, and choaked his child in the nurſing. *He* moddled the church as a body politic; took to himſelf the grand power of directing her univerſal diſcipline in faith and manners; of conſtituting, ordering, protecting and exalting as many biſhops, and dignified prelates as he thought fit. There is a hiſtorical tradition, that a voice was heard from heaven, on the very day thoſe great donations, and church-revenues were given, crying out, '*this day is poiſon poured into the church.*' Whether this tradition is true or falſe, it was not long after, before all his munificence proved poiſon with a witneſs; hence the common proverb of that period, '*Religion brought forth wealth, and the daughter devoured the mother.*'

BEFORE *his* time, few fallible councils thought of forming *creeds*; much leſs of conſigning to deſtruction, the bodies and ſouls of all the diſſenters from them: But as ſoon as they got CIVIL POWER upon their ſide, they exhibited, pretty feelingly, to others, what ſort of *advice* they would give. *There* was the main point, the chief and moſt efficacious ingredient, CIVIL POWER. Before they had *that* in their hands; all their ſucceſs depended upon the arts of inſinuation and deceit; but after, upon the edge of the ſword. *Then* the edicts of their aſſemblies, became ſacred and permanent. And not only the people felt the good effects of their new ſtrength; but they, themſelves often felt it, whenever they oppoſed one another; (and they never agreed very well.) Hear the opinion of that ſingular, reputable, and memorable father Gregory Nazianzene; "I am deſirous of avoiding all *ſynods*, becauſe, I never ſaw a good effect, or happy concluſion, from any one of them: They rather increaſe than leſſen the evils they were deſigned to prevent; for, there

aſſociations of divines were firſt ſet on foot with, and however they might talk of *only adviſing*, it is ſcarcely poſſible to point out one, but what, in proceſs of time, manifeſted at leaſt, a great deſire of *aſſuming*, and *decreeing*, and *enſlaving*, and *perſecuting*. And if we want to determine whether they *will* be pernicious, becauſe they *have* been ſo; we may recollect that when we determine whether theatrical entertainments *will* be detrimental, becauſe they *have* been ſo; we anſwer very ſtrongly in the affirmative: And without reaſoning much by analogy, we may determine that *hitherto* the greateſt part of eccleſiaſtical aſſociations *have* been the GRAND ENGINES OF THE DEVIL.

there the luſt of power, and love of contention, are manifeſted in inſtances innumerable." *

A GLANCE at two or three of the firſt of thoſe general councils may give us ſome pretty adequate idea of near all the reſt; ſince in the main they differed but little. *Euſebius* tells us, that "in anno domini 325, at the council of Nice, above 300 biſhops were brought together, ſome by the hope of gain, and others to ſee ſuch a miracle of an emperor as Conſtantine;" and it ſeems, they met with very good encouragement; for he abundantly rewarded them with rich preſents, long and ſumptuous entertainments, and poſts of grandeur on their return. All hiſtory agrees, that they were the moſt litigious, and contentious men; inſomuch that they began to quarrel through envy and ſpleen, and to accuſe one another even before the emperor. And when they met in council to do buſineſs, their conduct was not diſſimilar; for, the party accuſed having a written liſt of the articles which they were commanded to believe laid before them, immediately tore it all to pieces; and a great tumult ariſing, thoſe prieſts who preſented the paper, creed, or confeſſion for the other party to ſign, were cryed out on, as betrayers of the faith, and were ſo terrified, that they all aroſe, except two, and were the very firſt in condemning the ſentiments and party they had juſt before eſpouſed; and this very council alſo was upon the very brink of decreeing the celibacy of the Clergy, as agreeable to the divine will. † So much for the cart-loads of ſcholaſtic terms, and circumlocutory, perplexing, intricate definitions of faith, and endleſs, blind explanations of inexplicable myſteries, enforced by the mere dint of human authority!

THE next general council of Conſtantinople, in anno domini 381, was called to confirm the deciſions of that at Nice, but only encreaſed the rage of the controverſy. Previous to it, the emperor ordered the "people of his city to embrace the religion which Peter, prince of the apoſtles had delivered to the Romans;" § and *that*, was, always, whatever the head-pontiff pleaſed to call it; and all know, that light and darkneſs differ not more, than the different potiffs did in their different creeds.

* Operum. tom. I. p. 814. epiſt. 55. edit. paris 1630.

† Euſeb. in vita Conſt. l. 3. c. 6, &c. See alſo Letters to Blackſtone. § Sozom. l. 7.

creeds. The worthy father juſt now mentioned ſays concerning this ſecond council, "that thoſe conveyers of the *holy ghoſt*, thoſe preachers of *peace* to all men, grew ſo bitterly outrageous and clamorous againſt one another, in the midſt of the church bandying into parties, mutually accuſing each other, leaping about as if they were mad, under the impulſe of a luſt of power and dominion, that you would have thought they would have rent the world in pieces." And yet, by ſuch godly *vi et armis* was *orthodoxy* eſtabliſhed: Though in the end "THRONES, and not *orthodoxy*, was what they were after." *

'The fourth general council of Chalcedon, A. D. 451, was occaſioned by the extraordinary tranſactions of a council of Epheſus in the year 449, of which Dioſcorus, biſhop of Alexandria, was preſident; and in which the doctrine of the two natures in Chriſt after the incarnation was condemned, and the contrary doctrine of Eutyches affirmed. The menaces of the preſident, together with the ſoldiers and monks, who ſurrounded the council, terrified the whole aſſembly. And Flavianus, biſhop of Conſtantinople, who had condemned Eutyches, being accuſed by the preſident, and declared to be anathematized and depoſed; and appealing therefore from him, and ſome biſhops at the ſame time interpoſing in his behalf; the preſident ſtarted up, and ſternly called for the emperor's commiſſioners, by whoſe command

* Greg. Naz. de vit ſua, operum tom 2. p. 25.

'The general council of Epheſus, A D 431, was called on this occaſion. Neſtorius was of opinion, that the two natures in Chriſt were not ſo united after the incarnation, as to occaſion a mutual communication of properties. He therefore objected to calling the Virgin Mary Theotokos, the mother of God; and would have her called Chriſtotokos, the mother of Chriſt. The deſign of the council of Epheſus was to ſettle this notable diſpute; or rather to condemn Neſtorius. When they met, Cyril of Alexandria, the avowed enemy of Neſtorius, induced the biſhops preſent, of his own party, to proceed with great precipitance and violence to the condemnation of Neſtorius, before the arrival of John, biſhop of Antioch, and the biſhops who were with him; and that, in oppoſition to the proteſt of 60 or 70 biſhops, and of the emperor's commiſſioner, whom they drove out of the aſſembly. After that they ſent an account of what they had done inſcribed. "To Neſtorius, a ſecond Judas." When John and his party arrived, they depoſed Cyril; and Cyril and his party, in return, depoſed John. And thus there ſubſiſted two councils, mutually condemning each other. To allay the ſtorm, the emperor gave his ſanction to the depoſition of Neſtorius, Cyril, and Memnon, an active partizan of Cyril's, and they were arreſted by the emperor's commiſſioner: But he was afterwards brought (ſome ſay, by the money diſtributed amongſt his courtiers by the deputies of Cyril,) to alter his mind; to confirm, indeed, the depoſition of Neſtorius, whom he baniſhed; but to reſtore Cyril and Memnon. Ever ſince Cyril, and his party have been eſteemed the legitimate council of Epheſus." See Moſheim's hiſt. of the fifth cent. See alſo letters to Blackſtone.

command the proconſul of Aſia came in with the military, and a confuſed mob with chains and clubs and ſwords. And ſome biſhops not willing to declare, and others flying away, he cried out, "If any one refuſes to ſign, with me he hath to contend;" and then he and another biſhop carried about a *blank* paper, and obliged them all to ſign it. *After* which it was filled up with the charge of hereſy againſt Flavianus, and the ſentence of his depoſition. Flavianus ſtill excepting againſt the preſident, he and others fell furiouſly upon him, beating him barbarouſly, throwing him down, kicking and trampling upon him, inſomuch that three days after he died of the bruiſes he had received in the council.' * Hence we ſee, as a merry writer obſerves,

'Twas *thus they* prov'd their doctrine orthodox,
By apoſtolic *blows* and *knocks*.' †

And indeed, in moſt of ſuch councils, convocations, or aſſociations ſince, the hardeſt fiſt has made the ſoundeſt creed.

HAD there never been a kind emperor, Conſtantine, 'tis highly probable, that 'till this day, there had never been one cruel pope. *His* unboundedly liberal *temporalities* led the way, and never ceaſed, 'till they raiſed the papal chair, above all principalities, and at laſt, completed the whole fabric of POPERY in all its enormous hierarchy. If ever money appeared to be the root of all evil, it was *then*. The *emperor* rul'd the money; the money rul'd the prieſts; the prieſts rul'd the people; and, to ſpeak the truth, the devil ſeem'd to rule them all.

SECULAR POWER, in concert with the wiſdom of ſpiritual men, did wonders indeed! It made the exalted pontiffs infallible; it plucked up all bounds to their dominions; and bid the world adore them: It made their authority unqueſtionable and divine; it converted real bread into real fleſh; it conſtituted carved wood, and molten metals, and painted canvaſs, objects of fear, of love, and homage; it ſpread the doleful regions of purgatories in the bowels of the earth; it juſtifi d the vending of maſſes for the dead and damned; it made eternal bliſs to depend upon the abſolutions of popes; it made neceſſary the tortures of inquiſitions for the terror

* Moſheim's hiſtory of the ſecond century. † BUTLER's Hudibraſs.

terror for the living; it covered the earth with Cruſades for the honor of the lamb of God; it ſtagnated the atmoſpheres with the ſmoak of burning heretics; and finally introduced that artful lady ſuperſtition, with all her hoſt of countleſs ſpectres dancing at her heels.

In the reign of Conſtantine, that *unmerciful* kind emperor, it is well known, that the biſhop of Rome was far ſupereminent to all the other officers and dignitaries in the church: But Conſtantine, (who although he nobly delivered the church from the dreadful external frying pan of perſecution, threw her into the ſtill more dreadful, internal fire of contentions) by trying to make Conſtantinople the metropolis of his empire, and the glory of the world, beſtowed the moſt liberal donations, and illuſtrious marks of royal favors, on the biſhop of this new and auguſt city, thereby enabling him to contend with the roman pontiff for the greateſt ſhare of revenues and ſubmiſſion: The horrible and bloody conteſt for many years hung doubtful; 'till, after blinding the poor multitude and making them think, that all poſſible reverence and paſſive obedience ſhould be ſhewn to their ſpiritual leaders; and after ſtopping the mouths of the more diſcerning with gold and preferment, theſe two rivals, (for it was the faſhion of biſhops then, who were not too great cowards, to fight it out at the head of their own numerous armies) with all the magnificent, ſplendid marks of human greatneſs, contended with each other in a manner ——— too bad to be deſcribed; 'till having condemned, excommunicated, anathematized, ruined, and maſſacred thouſands in the ſhameful conteſt, and compleatly ſeparated the latin and greek churches, through the interpoſition of that monſter Phocas, who waded through brother's blood, to the imperial honors, the ſcale canted FOR THE SEE of ROME; and ſatan has never wanted prime miniſters of ſtate upon earth ſince.

THE grandeſt ſtroke that was ever given towards univerſal deſpotiſm in the church was in A. D. 372, when Valentinian enacted, that the biſhop of Rome, as God's vicegerent, ſhould applaud or condemn, all preachers, preaching, and religious matters throughout the empire. And to finiſh the whole plan, for fear the *common* people ſhould be uneaſy and doubt the equity of this unlimitted power; the ingenious pontiffs ordered ſome of their moſt accompliſhed artiſans to forge proper CREDENTIALS, containing a full delegated authority, from St. Peter the apoſtle, to their

primitive anceſtors in the *papal chair*; while they taught them that, according to appointment, the lineal ſucceſſion had been ſtrictly kept up! Aſtoniſhing! And what is ſtill more aſtoniſhing, is, that *this artifice*, in conjunction with civil power, proved effectual to ſtop all murmurs! Indeed, after all their cunning, ſome of the poor people who were obliged to pay for the releaſe of the ſouls of their relations in purgatory, could not help obſerving, that if *they* could not recollect ten relations that ever they had, yet, the *prieſts* could; and were ſure to tell them, that they had relations *there* too, as long as they had any money in their pockets. Had we a hundred tongues, an iron voice, and years at our command to tell them in; the innumerable, the unutterable conſequences of theſe gradual infringements, which finally ſhut out every ſpark of light, and ſhadow of liberty; inſomuch, that even *princes* could not tell, whether their crowns, their thrones, their wives, their children, or their lives, would be their own in the ſucceeding hours; nay, could *we* add to theſe the moſt extenſive hiſtoric knowledge, and the ſmootheſt eloquence to roll it off in; while *you* were bleſt with the moſt enduring patience to hear, we could not unfold the thouſandth part of thoſe, dark horrors, which upon the riveting of the chains, for more than ten dark ages, did overſpread all Europe.—And is it not a pity that the *britiſh* annals ſhould be ſtained? And even with the worſt of crimes? *Overboiling prieſtly zeal?* Is it not a pity that *ſhe*, the *reformed*, ſhould ever let it be ſaid, ſhe loved, in the dark, to hug that ugly hag, perſecution?—But we forbear—and above all, is it not a pity, O! YE AMERICANS, that *we*, or any of *our* anceſtors, who fled *from* perſecution, ſhould leave it for poſterity to ſay, '*they themſelves became perſecutors?*—Forgive us heaven!—O! my fellow-countrymen! trembling, we are aſhamed to turn over New-England's hiſtory! But, for the future, while we have a moment's reflection, or a ſpark of ſenſibility left us, let us bluſh for our fathers conduct, and ſolemnly unite to expiate it, by a better of our own.—O! how ſtrange is that epidemic diſeaſe, which hitherto, in every nation, has been the ruin of reformers! They nearly all dance the ſame giddy round!—Firſt, as they ought, throw off the intollerable burden of eccleſiaſtical hierarchies; then, emerging from obſcurity, ignorance and poverty, diſplay all their powers in defence of equity and truth: While the people charmed and captivated, in grateful return, love, fear, obey, honor, defend and exalt them; 'till the poor mortals, intoxicated with ingratitude, pride and madneſs, and looking down from ſuch lofty eminences,

eminences, forget who they were, become giddy and tumble headlong from juſtice, affability and amity, into auſterity, cruelty and deviliſhneſs! Strange indeed! Yet *this*, is the beaten track. Scarce can we find an eminent reformer from it, but what at laſt himſelf has trod in it: Be ye therefore ready, WATCH and OPPOSE. Oppoſe while you may, the very firſt appearance of ſlavery, eſpecially, *prieſtly* ſlavery. Almoſt every human calamity is gradually progreſſive, to oppoſe, to repulſe, to apply a remedy before the diſeaſe is irreſiſtible and incurable, is rational, manly, juſt and noble; but to ſit ſucking our fingers, 'till our burdens preſs ſo hard that we can neither ſupport them, nor throw them off, is characteriſtic rather of aſſes than of men.

WE ſhould now attempt to hint the glorious effects of a *toleration*, of this liberty; were we not apprehenſive, that we have already tranſgreſſed upon your unexampled patience: Suffice it then juſt to obſerve, that in the firſt place, by it, we are delivered from the numerous, dreadful conſequences attending the *prohibition* of it; in the ſecond, it cannot poſſibly have, any concomitant evils of its own; and in the third, even in a political view, it is the grandeſt, ſureſt and beſt cement of the various proteſtant communities and intereſts; conſequently an increaſer of their wealth, ſtrength and honor: For it is the only univerſal encourager of the arts, ſciences, and uſeful knowledge; and the moſt efficacious promoter of contentment, peace and concord: In ſhort, it is the GLORY of a nation. Traverſe all the mighty empires of the earth, and ſay, without a toleration of *this* liberty, what are they better than *Procruſtes* himſelf? By his bed he commands every gueſt to be meaſured; if too long, lop them; if too ſhort, ſtretch them: So, by their eſtabliſhed orthodoxy, every mind muſt be meaſured; if it believes too much, puniſh the body for it; if it believes too little, puniſh the body for it! Behold, Britain, ſhe who was late the beauty, and the wonder of the world; ſay, did ever her army, her navy, her commerce, her manufactures, her arts, her learning, her ſenatorial eloquence, or her ſtate policy, gain her half the eſteem and reverence that her TOLERATION did? Never. It was THAT, in conjunction with her CIVIL CONSTITION, which *onte* made the world tremble and adore. O! ye Americans, *religious liberty* was the diadem which firſt enticed your fathers hither; remember it; and ſtill hold it dearer than life. Remember alſo, the eaſy methods by which

its

its deſtruction has ever been brought about. Watch, and nip the damning apple in the bud. Now, while you *may* prevent every uſurping wretch from threatning that his little finger ſhall be thicker than his father's loins. Now, while you *may* deſtroy the whip of ſcorpions; and let our land be a jubilee; while the etherial concave rings with ceaſeleſs, grateful ſhouts of praiſe, for that moſt ineſtimable bleſſing.

And finally, ſince this America bids fair for being as great an empire as ever the ſun lighted, may millions yet unborn riſe up and call this generation *bleſſed*, who, through the King of kings, by their *undaunted reſolution*, *unremitted vigilance*, and *ſalutary proviſions*, ſecured for their poſterity the *greateſt bleſſings*, and moſt *invaluable privileges* which human creatures can enjoy. Thus, with our ſincere thanks for your animating attention, permit us to bid you FAREWELL.

VALEDICTIONS.

To the CORPORATION.

Gentlemen of the Corporation, it is with the higheſt pleaſure, we embrace this public opportunity of expreſſing our unfeigned gratitude for your noble aſſiduity, and indefatigable attempts to ſpread over this land, the happy influences, and ſalutary effects, of true learning; that ſovereign antidote againſt jeſuiſtical invaſions. And it is with no ſmall ſatisfaction, I now return you, in behalf of my Claſs, our moſt hearty thanks, for being admitted to the honors of the ſeminary in this place. Gentlemen, may you ſtill be encouraged in your benevolent deſign, while yon *alma mater*, like ſome prolific dame, with an annual increaſe, brings forth her ſons of genius and virtue; 'till ſhe has covered the earth with a glorious race of american Homers, Ciceros and Newtons, who ſhall bleſs mankind, raiſe her fame above old Athens, and render your names as immortal as the ſun; with theſe, our wiſhes, permit us, Gentlemen, to bid you FAREWELL.

To

To the PATRONS of the COLLEGE, and FRIENDS of LEARNING.

LEARNING was the glory of Rome, the pride of Greece, and the renown of Egypt; though unhappy for the glorious ſubject, we have been ſpeaking on, it was, in each of theſe celebrated nations, too much confined to the prieſts and the opulent: But, as the times are changed, it is with pleaſure we hope to ſee learning the glorious characteriſtic of this town and colony. True learning is the friend of liberty and religion; for the happy ſouls who have once felt her irradiating charms, will hardly ever after be enſlaved by tyrants or vice; by laymen or prieſts. And as a bleſſed preſage that it ſhall prevail, how are our happy eyes ſaluted with numbers, in this audience, of the moſt illuſtrious characters, not only from different towns in this colony, but from almoſt every colony on this wide, extended continent, who are all, well known, patrons and aſſiſtants in this glorious cauſe! Ye Mecænaſes of our age! Ye public-ſpirited friends of light and knowledge! It is with heart-felt joy we return you our warmeſt thanks, for your manly efforts to cheriſh the ſtudy of literature through this continent; and eſpecially are we bound by the deepeſt gratitude to thank, eſteem and honor the town of Providence: It is to YOU principally the inſtitution in this place owes her preſent ſtrength; it was ſolely by *your* unequalled generoſity that the ſimply grand and elegant building was erected on yon eminence to gladen the eyes of every magnanimous beholder; and it ſhall be for you fame ſhall blow her trump in future time. You have already ſignalized yourſelves by your prudent and uncommon liberality in ſupport of the greateſt ornament, honor and advantage ſociety can enjoy, learning; your names have already reached the moſt diſtant parts of this extenſive country, and often reechoed from the other ſide the atlantic. The men of letters now eſteem you, the illiterate bleſs you, and all poſterity, in ſucceſſion, ſhall declare, *you* were the men who heroically aſſiſted to ſcatter the clouds of ignorance from this land; by cauſing the ſun of knowledge to ſhine forth. You ſee, Gentlemen, that you have the greateſt encouragement to perſevere in your laudable benefactions; for not only knowledge increaſes; but the moſt learned and wealthy of every colony on the continent, with many alſo in Europe, are daily aſſiſting in your grand deſign. And *ſuch* are the men whoſe worthy labors can never be too often rehearſed; or too much imitated. May you, Gentlemen, and your worthy coad-

jutors, far and near, long flouriſh and ſucceed, 'till late, very late, you ceaſe your grateful efforts here, to take your ſeat where life and knowledge are the ſame, and *God himſelf* ſhall ſay, FAREWELL.

To the COMPANY of CADETS.

WE deſire now to return our thanks to the moſt reſpectable company of Cadets, who this day have eſcorted our honorable Governor and Corporation. Gentlemen, with a grateful ſenſe of the honor you have already done us, together with a full conviction, that next to our heavenly General himſelf, a good ſtanding militia, is the only ſecurity for our rights and privileges; we can't but wiſh you all imaginable ſucceſs; that you may be the grand means of diffuſing a true ſpirit of martial heroiſm through this colony and continent; and long receive, as you juſtly merit, for the generous example of military glory which you have this day exhibited; and eſpecially for the uncommon and aſtoniſhing progreſs which you have ſo lately made in that moſt noble and neceſſary art; the honor, eſteem and plaudit of the preſent and future generations, who with us are obligated to wiſh, that you may forever FARE WELL.

To the RESIDENTS at COLLEGE.

YE, happy youth!—at length the *day's* roll'd on!——
With mutual joy, and mutual gain, no more!
In concert ſweet, like birds of various note,
And age, and plume, in one harmonious grove;
Shall we together rove the healthful rounds
Of ſtudious life!— As friendly villagers,
On ſome fair ſummer's morn, with jocund mirth,
In numbers trip, to riffle all the ſweets,
And beauties of the ſpacious dewy meads;
So we, in nature's ample field, where fruits,
And flowers, and roots, for *mental* food, and health
Luxuriant grow, began to crop; but now!——
And yet, with envious love, ye favour'd ſtill,
We ſtill congratulate. *We* quit yon ſeat
Of knowledge, forc'd the world's rude waves to tempt,
And with our ſlender, ſhallow, untry'd ſkiffs
Her dang'rous ſeas to courſe, and buffet through
The thick and frequent ſtorms of noiſy life;
Yet, may the muſes grant YOU kindeſt aid,
And young imagination flutt'ring, nurſe

On

On high Parnaſſus: Still ſupply rich draughts
From the caſtalion font, your tender minds,
To raiſe, to fire, to cheriſh and inſtruct
In all the mazy-running labyrinths
Of nature's ſecret-working myſteries.
In ſkilful depths of commerce, government,
Arts, arms and agriculture, may you dive.
And ſince, by heav'n, you thus ſurrounded ſtand
With rareſt bleſſings mortals know on earth;
Still ſhow to all around, your Hearts replete
With love and gratitude to God and man;
Still heed your ſkilful, faithful, kindeſt guides,
Who conſtant lead you, to the greateſt good;
While virtuous diligence marks all your ways,
And conſcious friends, with pleaſure cry, FAREWELL.

To the PRESIDENT and PROFESSORS.

WITH joy, with grief, while common juſtice pleads,
Though loath to be a panegyriſt's boaſt,
And ſure to ſhow the live carnation's bluſh,
If but a part of all your kindneſs drops
From grateful lips—in one ſhort parting word
Permit e'en *here*, dear Sirs, to eaſe our hearts
Which groan with thankfulneſs, for all your care;
Your gen'rous, conſtant care, and vigilance
To open Natures's volume wide, and teach
The import of its various characters,
To all not legible. Your labors———But—
Your acquiſitions, and your parts, we leave
To be determin'd by the public's watchful eye;
Nor tempt the envious to deny the truth:
Howe'er, for one and all, for once and all,
Though why, the world, we dare not, will not tell,
We thank you, Sirs; and hence our hearts unite,
That heav'n's rich bleſſings on your heads may reſt,
And long ſucceſs your noble efforts follow;
While peace, and joy, and plenty laugh around,
'Till angels waft you from your labors here,
To yon celeſtial ſcenes where knowledge, love,
Tranſport and virtue fill your bliſsful minds,
And all forever ceaſe to bid FAREWELL.

To his CLASS-MATES, Meſſr's JOHN DORRANCE, DWIGHT FOSTER, TIMOTHY JONES, JACOB MANN, and ELIAS PENNIMAN,

WITH tardy pace——declining long the taſk,
(Such is the parting with the ſouls we love!)
At length my mates, the laſt diſſolving ſtroke
Comes home to us!——The pleaſing circle's run!——
With landſkips gay, and ſmiling brows, while nought,
But chearful friendſhip ſparkles in the eye,
No more!—at eaſe reclin'd on yonder hill,
Where verdent graſs perfum'd with ſweeteſt flowers,
By faithful nature's provident command
Prepares a couch unknown to rankling care;
While o'er contented heads, thoſe ſhady trees,
Seem pleas'd to ſpread their num'rous, waving bows,
Or ſweetly bluſhing in their vernal bloom,
Or gently bending, with their ripen'd fruit!
Alas! no more, in thoſe fair, fertile fields,
Where zephyrs gently fan the ſultry heat,
Shall we in harmleſs jolity and mirth,
And converſe free, of all the mighty minds
Of ancient times, talk down the ſummer's ſun!
In wint'ry ſtorms, by gen'rous fires, no more
Together turn the grave hiſtorian's page!
Nor ſearch the greek and roman claſſics more!
Nor ſwell with rapture at the poet's ſong!
No more together ſnuff the midnight lamps,
To catch celeſtial flames from dying Catos!
No more in queſt of ſweet inſtruction's aid,
Shall we together wait our teachers kind!
But, like the feather'd young, puſh'd from their neſts,
Though ſcarcely fledg'd, we *ſingly* hence muſt ſhift,
Toſs'd by the tempeſts of the bluſt'ring world!——
With recollection emulous, let's oft
Look back on all the pleaſing hours we've paſt;
While taſte for ſcience, virtue, truth, ſtill prompt
To ſeek the nobleſt end of ſouls, increaſe
Of knowledge, love of God, and love of man.
Still let a grateful ſenſe of favors, oft
Receiv'd on yonder hill, glow in our breaſts;
While friendſhip ſteady as the rolling ſun
Strikes light and life through all our ſcatter'd ways,
And animates to deeds of amity;
Deeds of reciprocal benevolence;
While each to other crys, though far, or near,
My mate, my friend, my brother, FARE THOU WELL.